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THE

WORKS

Of the Most Reverend

Dr. JOHN SHARP,

LATE

Lord Archbishop of YORK.

IN

SEVEN VOLUMES.

CONTAINING

ONE HUNDRED and TWELVE

SERMONS and DISCOURSES

ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS

With some PAPERS wrote in the

POPISH CONTROVERSY.

The NINTH EDITION.

LONDON:

Printed for J. and P. KNAPTON, T. and T. LONGMAN, C. HITCH and L. HAWES, A. MILLAR, and J. and J. RIVINGTON. M.DCC LIV.

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THE

WORKS

Of the Moſt Reverend

Dr. *JOHN SHARP*,

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Lord Archbiſhop of *YORK*.

VOL. I. CONTAINING,

FIFTEEN SERMONS

PREACHED ON

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SERMON I.

The Things that make for Peace: Or, The Obligation of Christians to Church-Communion, and mutual Charity.

ROM. xiv. 19.

Let us therefore follow after the things that make for peace.

WHOSOEVER understandeth any thing of the state of christianity, as it hath now been for some ages in the world, will be easily convinced, that there is no one point of our religion more necessary to be daily preached, to be earnestly pressed and insisted on, than that of peace and love, and unity, here recommended by the apostle.

It hath fared (as the learned Mr. Hales observed) with the christian religion in this matter, as it did with the Jewish of old. The great and principal commandment which God gave the Jews, and which

(as they themſelves teach) was the foundation of all their law, was, to worſhip the God of Iſrael, and him only to ſerve: Yet ſuch was the perverſeneſs of that people, that this was the commandment, that of all others they could never be brought to keep; but they were continually running into idolatry, notwithſtanding all the methods that God made uſe of to reclaim them from that ſin. What the worſhip of one God was to the Jews; that peace, and love, and unity, is to the Chriſtians, even the great diſtinguiſhing law and character of their profeſſion. And yet, to the ſhame of Chriſtians it may be ſpoken, there is no one commandment in all Chriſt's religion, that has been ſo generally and ſo ſcandalouſly violated among his followers, as this. Witneſs the many bitter feuds and contentions that have ſo long embroiled Chriſtendom; and the numerous ſects, and parties, and communions, into which, at this day, it ſtands divided.

And, God knows, this is a thing that cannot be ſufficiently lamented among ourſelves: For though, in many reſpects, we are the happieſt nation in the world; and particularly in this, that we have the advantage of all others, both as to the conſtitution of our church, and the purity of Chriſt's doctrine profeſſed therein; yet in this point of ſchiſms, and diviſions, and religious quarrels, we are as unhappy, if not more, than any.

Whether ever we ſhall ſee that bleſſed day, when theſe our breaches will be healed; and that an end being put to our unaccountable ſeparations, and the unchriſtian animoſities they are the occaſion of, we ſhall all join together in one communion, and with one mind, and one mouth, glorify God, (as the apoſtle expreſſes it) God only knows. But ſure I am, it is the duty of every one of us, heartily to pray for it;

and

and not only ſo, but, in our place and ſtation, to contribute all we can towards it. It was this conſideration that put me upon the choice of theſe words of St. Paul, for my argument at this time: *Let us therefore follow after the things that make for peace.*

In treating of which I ſhall endeavour two things:

I. To explain the duty here recommended, by reducing it to its particular rules and inſtances.

II. To ſet before you the great obligations that lie upon us to the practice of it.

As to the firſt of theſe things, viz. What is contained or implied in this duty of following after the things that make for peace; you may be pleaſed to take notice, that this duty hath a twofold object, according to the two different relations and capacities in which we are to be conſidered; namely, the church our common mother, and particular chriſtians our brethren. In the firſt relation, we are conſider'd as ſubjects; in the other, as fellow-chriſtians. Now, with reſpect to the former, the peace we are to purſue implies obedience, and the preſervation of communion, in oppoſition to ſchiſm and ſeparation. With reſpect to the latter, it implies mutual love and charity, in oppoſition to quarrels and contentions. So that, you ſee, my buſineſs upon this firſt head muſt be, to ſhew, what are the particulars of our duty, or what are the things that make for peace, in both theſe reſpects.

I begin with what is due from us to the church in order to peace, as peace ſtands in contra-diſtinction to ſchiſm. And this point I ſhall beg leave to diſcuſs very plainly and particularly; becauſe I fear many of us have wrong notions about it: And yet it is a matter of ſuch conſequence, that the right underſtanding of

it would go a great way to the cure of the ſad diviſions that are among us.

What I have to ſay upon this point, I ſhall comprize in the four following propoſitions; taking my riſe from the firſt principle of church-ſociety.

The firſt propoſition I lay down, is this, *That every Chriſtian is, by virtue of his chriſtianity, a member of the church of Chriſt, and is bound to join in external communion with it, where it can be had.*

For the clearing of this, let it be taken notice of, that the method which our Saviour ſet on foot for our ſalvation, does not ſo much conſider us as ſingle perſons, as joined together in one common ſociety. It was his deſign, to gather to himſelf a church out of mankind, to erect and form a body politick, of which himſelf ſhould be the head, and particular Chriſtians the members; and in this method, through obedience to his laws and government, to bring men to ſalvation.

This is variouſly ſet forth to us in the New Teſtament[a]. Sometimes Chriſt and Chriſtians are repreſented under the notion of a vine; of which he is the root, and they are the branches. Sometimes under the notion of a natural body, of which Chriſt is the head, and all believers the members[b]. And accordingly, whatever Chriſt is ſaid to have done or ſuffered for mankind, he is ſaid to have done or ſuffered for them, not as ſcattered individuals, but as incorporated into a church[c]. Thus *Chriſt loved the church, and gave himſelf for it*[d]. *Chriſt redeemed the church with his own blood. Chriſt is the Saviour of his body*[e], that is to ſay, the church; with many paſſages of the like importance. The plain conſequence from hence is, that

[a] John xv. 1. [b] 1 Cor. xii. [c] Eph. v. 29.
[d] Acts xx. 28. [e] Eph. v. 25.

that every perſon, ſo far as he is a Chriſtian, ſo far he is a member of the church. And, agreeably hereto, it is very plain that baptiſm, which is by all acknowledged to be the rite of initiating us into chriſtianity, is in ſcripture declared to be the rite whereby we are entred and admitted into the church. Thus St. Paul expreſly tells us, that *by one ſpirit we are all baptized into one body* [f].

Now then it being thus evident, that every Chriſtian, as a Chriſtian, is a member of that body of Chriſt which we call the church; there will be little need of taking pains to prove, that every ſuch perſon is obliged to join in external communion with the church, where he can do ſo; for the very nature of this church-memberſhip doth imply it. Without this, neither the ends of church-ſociety, nor the benefits accruing to us there-from, can be attained.

Firſt, not the ends of it: the ends of church-ſociety are the more ſolemn worſhip of God, and the publick profeſſion of our religion, and the mutual edification one of another: Now how theſe can be in any meaſure attained, without aſſociating together in publick aſſemblies and mutual offices, and other acts of external communion with one another, cannot any ways be imagined.

And as little, in the ſecond place, can it be conceived, how without this we can be made partakers of the benefits and privileges that Chriſt hath made over to the members of his church. For we are to conſider, that God hath ſo ordered the matter, (and without doubt for this very reaſon, to unite us the more firmly in ſociety) that the privileges of the goſpel, ſuch as pardon of ſin, and the grace of the

[f] 1 Cor. xii. 13.

Holy Spirit, are not ordinarily conveyed to us so immediately by God, but that there must intervene the ministry of men. God's holy word and sacraments are the channels in which they are derived to us; and those to whom he hath committed the ministry of reconciliation, and the power of the keys, are the hands that must dispense them. We have no promise of spiritual graces, but by these means: So that in order to the partaking of them, there is an absolute necessity laid upon us of joining and communicating with the church.

It is true indeed, God doth not so tie himself up to these means, but that he can, and will, in some cases, confer the benefits of them without them: As in case of a general apostacy of the church: or of persecution for religion; or of any unjust excommunication, or any other case where communion with a true visible church is denied to us. But though God doth act extraordinarily in extraordinary cases, where these means cannot be had; yet this doth not at all diminish, much less take away the necessity of making use of them when they can be had.

From what hath been discoursed on this first proposition, we may, by the way, gather these two things; I only name them:

1. How untrue their position is, that maintain, that all our obligation to church-communion doth arise from a voluntary admission of ourselves into some particular congregation, and an explicit promise or engagement to join with it in church-ordinances.

2. How wildly and extravagantly they discourse, that talk of a christianity at large, without relation to a church, or communion with any society of Christians.

The

The second proposition is, *That every one is bound to join in communion with the established national church to which he belongs, supposing there be nothing in the terms of its communion that renders it unlawful for him so to do.*

For if we are bound to maintain communion with the catholick church, as I have before proved, it is plain, that we are bound to maintain communion with that part of it, within whose verge the Divine Providence has cast us. For we cannot communicate with the catholick church, but by communicating with some part of it: And there is no communicating with any part of it, but that under which we live, or where we have our residence.

Well, but it may be said, that there may be several distinct churches in the place where we live. There may be the fixed regular assemblies of the national church; and there may be separate congregations; both which are, or pretend to be, parts of the catholick church; so that it may be all one as to our communicating with that, which of these we join with, supposing we join but with one of them; and consequently, there is no necessity from that principle that we should hold communion with the public assemblies of the national church.

But as to this, I desire it may be considered, that that which lays an obligation upon us to join in communion with the church, (to wit, our being members of that one body of Christ) doth also lay an obligation upon us, as much as in us lies, to preserve the unity of that body, (for this both the fundamental laws of society, and the express precepts of christianity, do require of every member:) But now to make a rent in, or separate from, any part of the body of Christ, with which we may lawfully communicate (and such we

now ſuppoſe the eſtabliſhed aſſemblies of the nation to be) is directly contrary to the preſerving the unity of that body: And therefore, certainly, ſuch a rent, or ſeparation, muſt be unlawful. And, if ſo, then it muſt be unlawful alſo to join with any congregation of men among us that have made ſuch a rent or ſeparation.

So that let our pretences be what they will, ſo long as the fixed regular aſſemblies of the nation wherein we live, do truly belong to the catholick church, and we can lawfully join with them, it is certain we are bound ſo to do, and not to join with thoſe congregations that have withdrawn themſelves from them; for to do this would be, to join in ſociety with ſeparatiſts, would be a partaking of their ſin, and a breach of the apoſtle's precept of avoiding thoſe that cauſe diviſions [a].

The third propoſition is, *That the being a member of any church, doth oblige a man to ſubmit to all the laws and conſtitutions of that church.*

This propoſition is in the general ſo unqueſtionable, that no ſober man will deny it. And indeed, it is the baſis upon which all ſocieties are founded, and by which they do ſubſiſt. For to ſuppoſe a ſociety, and yet to ſuppoſe the members of it not under an obligation to obey its laws and government, is to make ropes of ſand; to ſuppoſe a body without ſinews and ligaments, to hold its parts together.

So that all the queſtion here, is, concerning the nature and extent of the church's power over her members; how far, and in what inſtances, ſhe hath authority to oblige them? Which is a queſtion not difficult to be anſwered, if men would come to it without paſſion and prejudice. For

[a] Rom. xvi. 17.

For it must be acknowledged, in the first place, that the church must, as all other societies, be intrusted with, at least, so much power over her subjects as is necessary for the securing her own welfare and preservation: For to think otherwise, is to suppose God to have founded the church, and intended the well-being and continuance of it, which are things that every one must grant; and yet to suppose, that he hath denied her the use of the means without which that well-being and continuance cannot be attained; which is monstrous and contradictious.

Farthermore, it must be granted, that the welfare and preservation of the church cannot be secured, but upon these two suppositions; first, that provision be made for the due and orderly performance of the worship of God. Secondly, that there be means of maintaining peace and unity amongst its members. This latter is necessary to the welfare and preservation of a church as a society; the former is necessary to it as a religious society.

Now then this being admitted, it follows in the general, that whatever power over her subjects is necessary, in order to either of these things; all that, at least, must be supposed to be lodged in the church, that is to say, in those that have the government of it.

So that from hence it is plain, in the first place, that the church hath power so far to restrain the exercise of her subjects liberty, as to oblige them to all such laws, rules, orders, and ceremonies as she shall establish, for the more solemn, regular, decent and convenient administration of religious affairs. And if it be questioned, whether her appointments do indeed conduce to that end, of that she herself is to be the judge; her members being no farther concerned therein, than

only, before they obey her impoſitions, to ſee, that they be not repugnant to the known laws of God. This power the church muſt be ſuppoſed to have, otherwiſe ſhe will not be enabled to make proviſion for the firſt thing whereon her welfare doth depend, viz. the performance of God's worſhip and ſervice in a due and orderly manner.

Secondly, from hence alſo it is plain, that the church muſt be furniſhed with a power to end and determine controverſies of religion that ariſe among its members: that is to ſay, to give ſuch an authoritative deciſion of them, as that all parties are bound to acquieſce in it: For without this, ſhe would be defective in the ſecond thing required to her welfare and preſervation, viz. maintaining herſelf in peace and unity.

But here it may be taken notice, that this power of ending controverſies, which we aſcribe to the church, doth not imply any authority over our judgments, or that, in virtue thereof ſhe can oblige us to give an inward aſſent to her determinations, any farther than ſhe gives us evidence for the truth of them (which is an extravagant power the church of Rome doth challenge to herſelf:) but only in authority over our practice, that ſhe can oblige us to ſubmit ſo far to her definitions, as not to act any thing contrary to them. A power in the former ſenſe is not neceſſary to the church's peace; and the reaſon is, becauſe our judgments and opinions, ſo long as we keep them to ourſelves, cannot poſſibly cauſe any diſturbance in, or do any injury to, ſociety: But a power in the latter ſenſe is abſolutely neceſſary; for if men may be allowed to vent and publiſh whatever fancies come into their heads, and the church have no authority to

impose silence upon them, it cannot be avoided, but she will be over-run with heresies, and embroiled in infinite quarrels and controversies, to the destruction of her publick peace.

The fourth proposition is, *That we can have no just cause of withdrawing our communion from the church whereof we are members, but when we cannot communicate with it without the commission of a sin.*

For if we are bound to communicate with the church when we can lawfully do so, as has been before proved; it is plain, we are bound so long to continue our communion with the church, till it be unlawful to continue in it any longer: But it cannot be unlawful to continue in her communion, 'till she require something as a condition of her communion, that is a sin.

So that there are but two cases, wherein it can be lawful to withdraw our communion from a church; because there are but two cases, wherein communion with her can be sinful. One is, when the church requires of us, as a condition of her communion, an acknowledgment and profession of that for a truth, which is an error. The other is, when the church requires of us, as a condition of her communion, the joining with her in some practices which are against the laws of God. In these two cases, to withdraw our obedience to the church, is so far from being a sin, that it is a necessary duty; because we have an obligation to the laws of God, antecedent to that we have to those of the church; and we are bound to obey these no farther than they are consonant or agreeable to those.

But now from this discourse it will appear, how insufficient those causes, how unwarrantable those grounds,

grounds, are, upon which many among us have proceeded to ſeparation from our church.

For, firſt, If what I have laid down be true, it cannot be true, that unſcriptural impoſitions are a warrantable cauſe of ſeparation from a church; ſuppoſing that by unſcriptural, be meant no more than only what is neither commanded nor forbid in the ſcriptures. For the actions required by theſe unſcriptural impoſitions, are either in themſelves lawful to be done, or not lawful to be done. If they be in themſelves unlawful to be done, then they do not fall under that notion of unſcriptural we here ſpeak of; they are downright ſins, and ſo either particularly, or in the general, forbid in the ſcripture. If they be in themſelves lawful to be done, then it cannot be imagined how their being commanded, can make them unlawful: So that in this caſe, there is no ſin in yielding obedience to the church, and conſequently no cauſe of withdrawing our communion from it.

Neither, ſecondly, can it be true, that errors in a church as to matter of doctrines, or corruptions as to matter of practice, ſo long as thoſe errors and corruptions are only ſuffered, but not impoſed, can be a ſufficient cauſe of ſeparation; the reaſon is, becauſe theſe things are not ſins in us, ſo long as we do not join with the church in them. So that ſo long as we can communicate with a church, without either profeſſing her errors, or partaking in her ſinful practices, as in the preſent caſe it is ſuppoſed we may do; ſo long we are bound, upon the principle before laid down, not to ſeparate from her.

Neither, in the third and laſt place, is the enjoying a more profitable miniſtry, or living under a more pure diſcipline in a ſeparate congregation, a juſt cauſe of

of forſaking the communion of the church of which we are members: And the reaſon is, becauſe we are not to commit a ſin for the promoting a good end. Now (as we have ſaid) it is a ſin to forſake the communion of the church, whereof we are members, ſo long as her communion is not ſinful; but the enjoyment of a leſs profitable miniſtry, or a leſs pure diſcipline, doth not make her communion ſinful; therefore the enjoyment of a more pure miniſtry, or a more profitable diſcipline, cannot make a ſeparation from her lawful.

Thus have I, as briefly as I could, repreſented to you the particulars of that duty we owe to our common mother, in the preſervation of her unity and communion. And I hope I have not been ſo zealous for peace, as to have been at all injurious to truth.

I am confident I have ſaid nothing but what is very agreeable to ſcripture and reaſon, and the ſenſe of the beſt and ancienteſt Chriſtians: And I am certain, I have not intrenched upon any of thoſe grounds upon which our anceſtors proceeded to the reformation of religion among us. And for moſt of the things here delivered, we have alſo the ſuffrage of ſeveral, and thoſe the moſt learned and moderate, of our diſſenting brethren.

And now, if after this, any one be offended, as indeed theſe kind of diſcourſes are ſeldom very acceptable; all I can ſay, is this, that the truths here delivered, are really of ſo great importance to religion and the public peace, that they ought not to be diſſembled or ſuppreſſed, for any bad reception they may meet with from ſome men: But as for the manner of delivering them, I have taken all the care I could, not to give offence to any.

I now pass on to the second part of my task upon this head; which is to consider the duty recommended in the text, with relation to particular Christians our brethren.

And here my business is, to direct you to the pursuit of these things that make for peace; as peace signifies mutual love and charity, in opposition to strife, and bitterness, and contentions.

The things that make for peace, in this sense, are more especially these that follow, which I shall deliver by way of rules and advices.

The first rule is, to distinguish carefully between matters of faith, and matters of opinion; and as to these latter, to be willing that every one should enjoy the liberty of judging for himself.

This is one thing that would help very much to the extinguishing of those unnatural heats and animosities, which have long been the reproach of Christians. If men would set no greater value upon their notions and opinions, than they do deserve; if they would make a difference between necessary points, and those that are not so; and, in those things that are not necessary, would not rigorously tie up others to their measures, but would allow every man to abound in his own sense, so long as the church's peace is not hereby injured, we should not have so many bitter quarrels and heart-burnings among us. But, alas! whilst every one will frame a system of divinity of his own head, and every puny notion of that system must be christen'd by the name of an article of faith; and every man that doth not believe just a he doth, must strait be a heretick for not doing so: How can it be expected but we must wrangle eternally?

It

It were heartily to be wiſhed, that Chriſtians would conſider, that the articles of faith (thoſe things that God hath made neceſſary by every one to be believed, in order to his ſalvation) are but very few; and they are all of them ſo plainly and clearly ſet down in the ſcripture, that it is impoſſible for any ſincere honeſt-minded man to miſs of the true ſenſe of them; and they have farther this badge, to diſtinguiſh them from all other truths, that they have an immediate influence upon mens lives, a direct tendency to make men better; whereas moſt of thoſe things that make the matter of our controverſies, and about which we make ſuch a noiſe and clamour, and for which we ſo bitterly cenſure and anathematize one another, are quite of another nature; they are neither ſo clearly revealed or propounded in the ſcripture, but that even good men, through the great difference of their parts, learning and education, may, after their beſt endeavours, vary in their ſentiments about them. Nor do they at all concern a chriſtian life, but are matters of pure notion and ſpeculation; ſo that it cannot with any reaſon, be pretended, that they are points upon which mens ſalvation doth depend. It cannot be thought that God will be offended with any man for his ignorance or miſtakes concerning them: And, if not, if a man may be a good Chriſtian, and go to heaven, whether he holds the right or the wrong ſide in theſe matters, for God's ſake why ſhould we be angry with any one for having other opinions about them than we have? Why ſhould we not rather permit men to uſe their underſtandings as well as they can; and where they fail of the truth, to bear with them, as God himſelf without queſtion will; than by ſtickling for every unneceſſary

ceſſary truth, deſtroy that peace, and love, and amity, that ought to be among Chriſtians?

The ſecond thing I would recommend, is a great ſimplicity and purity of intention in the purſuit of truth; and at no hand to let paſſion, or intereſt, or any ſelf-end, be ingredient into our religion.

The practice of this would not more conduce to the diſcovery of truth, than it would to the promoting of peace: For it is eaſy to obſerve, that it is not always a pure concernment for the truth, in the points in controverſy, that makes us ſo zealous, ſo fierce, and ſo obſtinate in our diſputes for or againſt them; but ſomething, of which that is only the maſk and pretence, ſome by-ends that muſt be ſerved, ſome ſecular intereſt that we have eſpouſed, which muſt be carried on.

We have either engaged ourſelves to ſome party, and ſo its intereſts, right or wrong, muſt be promoted; or we have taken up an opinion inconſiderately at the firſt, and appeared in the favour of it, and afterward our own credit doth oblige us to defend it: Or we have received ſome ſlight or diſappointment from the men of one way, and ſo in pure pet and revenge we paſs over to their adverſaries: Or it is for our gain and advantage, that the differences among us be ſtill kept on foot: Or we deſire to get ourſelves a name by ſome great atchievements in the noble ſcience of controverſies: Or we are poſſeſſed with the ſpirit of contradiction: Or we delight in novelties: Or we love to be ſingular.

Theſe are the things that too often both give birth to our controverſies, and alſo nouriſh and foment them.

If

If we would but caſt theſe beams out of our eyes, we ſhould both ſee more clearly, and certainly live more peaceably. But whilſt we purſue baſe and ſordid ends, under the pretence of maintaining truth, we ſhall always be in error, and always in contention.

Let us therefore quit ourſelves of all our prepoſſeſſions; let us mortify all our pride and vain-glory, our paſſion and emulation, our covetouſneſs and revenge, and bring nothing in the world to our debates about religion, but only the pure love of truth, and then our controverſies will not be ſo long, and they will be more calmly and peaceably managed, and they will redound to the greater good of all parties.

And this I dare ſay farther, to encourage you to labour after this temper of mind, that he that comes thus qualified to the ſtudy of religion, though he may not have the luck always to light on the truth, yet with all his errors, be they what they will, he is more acceptable to God, than the man that hath truth on his ſide, yet takes it up or maintains it to ſerve a turn. He that believes a falſhood after he hath uſed his ſincere endeavours to find the truth, is not half ſo much a heretick as he that profeſſeth a truth out of evil principles, and proſtituteth it to unworthy ends.

The third rule is, never to quarrel about words and phraſes: but ſo long as other men mean much-what the ſame that we do, let us be content, though they have not the luck to expreſs themſelves ſo well.

I do not know how it comes to paſs, whether thro' too much heat and eagerneſs of diſputing, that we do not mind one another's ſenſe; or whether through too much love to our own manner of thinking or ſpeaking, that we will not endure any thing but what is conveyed to us in our own method: But, really,

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it often happens, that moſt bitter quarrels do commence, not ſo much from the different ſenſe of the contending parties concerning the things they contend about, as from the different terms they uſe to expreſs the ſame ſenſe, and the different grounds they proceed upon, or arguments they make uſe of for the proof of it.

For my part, I verily believe that this is the caſe of ſeveral of thoſe diſputes, in which we proteſtants do often engage at this day. I do not think, in many points, our differences are near ſo wide as they are ſometimes repreſented, but that they might eaſily be made up with a little allowance to mens words and phraſes, and the different methods of deducing their notions.

It would be, perhaps, no hard matter to make this appear in thoſe controverſies that are ſo much agitated among us concerning faith and juſtification, and the neceſſity of good works to ſalvation; and imputed righteouſneſs, and the difference between virtue and grace; with ſome others, if this were a fit place for it. The difference that is among us as to theſe points is, poſſibly, not much greater than this, That ſome men in theſe matters ſpeak more clearly and fully; others, more imperfectly and obſcurely. Some men convey their ſenſe in plain and proper words; others delight in metaphors, and do perhaps extend the figurative expreſſions of ſcripture: Some reaſon more cloſely, and upon more certain principles; others poſſibly may proceed upon weaker grounds, and miſapply texts of ſcripture, and diſcourſe more looſly. But both parties (eſpecially the more moderate of both) ſeem to drive at much-what the ſame thing, tho' by different ways, as appears from this, that being interrogated concerning the conſequences of their ſeveral opinions,

opinions, they generally agree in admitting or rejecting the same.

But, fourthly, another thing that would make for peace, is this; never to charge upon men the consequences of their opinions, when they expressly disown them.

This is another thing that doth hugely tend to widen our differences, and to exasperate mens spirits one against another, when having examined some opinion of a man or party of men, and finding very great absurdities and evil consequences necessarily to flow from it, we presently throw all those into the dish of them that hold the opinion; as if they could not hold the one, but they must necessarily own the other: Whereas indeed, the men we thus charge may be so innocent in this matter, that they do not in the least dream of such consequences; or if they did, they would be so far from owning them, that they would abhor the opinion for their sakes.

To give you an instance or two in this matter: It is a doctrine maintain'd by some, that God's will is the rule of justice; or, that every thing is therefore just or good, because God wills it. Those that are concerned to oppose this doctrine do contend, that if this doctrine be true, it will necessarily follow, that no man can have any certainty of the truth of any one proposition that God hath revealed in scripture; because, say they, his eternal faithfulness and veracity are by this doctrine made arbitrary things. Granting now that this by just consequence be made out, yet I dare say those that hold the aforesaid doctrine would be very angry, and had good reason so to be, if they were told that they did not, no, nor could not, upon their principles, certainly believe the scripture.

Some

Some men think that they can with demonſtrative evidence make out, that the doctrine of God's irreſpective decrees doth, in its conſequences, overthrow the whole goſpel; that it doth deſtroy the nature of rewards and puniſhments, cuts the very ſinews of mens endeavours after virtue, makes all laws, promiſes, exhortations, perfectly idle and inſignificant things, and renders God the moſt unlovely being in the world. Now ſuppoſing all this to be true, yet it would be a moſt unjuſt and uncharitable thing to affirm of any that believe that doctrine, (many of whom are certainly pious and good men,) that they do maintain any ſuch impious and blaſphemous opinions as thoſe that are now mentioned.

The ſum of all is, that a man may believe a propoſition, and not believe all that follows from it: Not but that all the deductions from a propoſition are equally true, and equally credible with the propoſition from whence they are reduced; but a man may not ſo clearly ſee through the propoſition, as to diſcern that ſuch conſequences are really deducible from it; ſo that we are at no hand to charge them upon him, unleſs he do explicitly own them.

If this rule was obſerved, our differences would not make ſo great a noiſe, nor would the errors and heterodoxes maintained among us, appear ſo monſtrous and extravagant; and we ſhould ſpare a great many hard words, and odious appellations, which we now too prodigally beſtow upon thoſe that differ from us.

The fifth rule is, to abſtract mens perſons from their opinions; and in examining or oppoſing theſe, never to make any reflections upon thoſe.

This is a thing ſo highly reaſonable, that methinks no pretender to ingenuity ſhould ever need to be called upon

upon to obſerve it: For it ſeems very abſurd and ridiculous, in any argument to meddle with that that nothing concerns the queſtion. But what do perſonal reflections concern the cauſe of religion? Whatever it may be to the reputation of an opinion, I am ſure it is nothing to the truth of it, that ſuch or ſuch a man holds it.

And truly if men would leave this impertinence, we might hope for a better iſſue of our religious debates: But whilſt men will forſake the merits of the cauſe, and unmanly fall to railing and diſparaging mens perſons, and ſcraping together all the ill that can be ſaid of them, they blow the coals of contention, they ſo imbitter and envenom the diſpute, that it rankles into incurable diſaſters and heart-burnings.

Chriſtians would do well to conſider, that theſe mean arts of expoſing mens perſons to diſcredit their opinions, are very much unworthy the dignity of their profeſſion, and moſt of all miſ-becoming the ſacredneſs and venerableneſs of the truth they contend for. And beſides, no cauſe ſtands in need of them, but ſuch an one as is extremely baffled and deſperate; even then they are the worſt arguments in the world to ſupport it, for quick-ſighted men will eaſily ſee through the duſt we endeavour to raiſe; and thoſe that are duller will be apt to ſuſpect, from our being ſo angry and ſo waſpiſh, that we have but a bad matter to manage.

We ſhould conſider, that mens perſons are ſacred things; that whatever power we have to judge of their opinions, we have no authority to judge or cenſure Them: That to bring them upon the ſtage, and there throw dirt on them, is highly rude and uncivil, and an affront to human ſociety, and the moſt contrary thing

thing in the world to christian charity, which is so far from enduring reproaches and evil-speaking, that it obliges us to cover as much as we can all the faults, and even the very indiscretions, of others.

The sixth and last thing I shall recommend to you, as an expedient of peace, is a vigorous pursuit of holiness.

Do but seriously set yourselves to be good, do but get your hearts deeply affected with religion as well as your heads, and then there is no fear but you will all be the sons of peace.

We may talk what we will, but really it is our not practising our religion, that makes us so contentious and disputatious about it: It is our emptiness of the divine life, that makes us so full of speculation and controversy. Was but that once firmly rooted in us, these weeds and excrescences of religion would presently dry up and wither; we should loathe any longer to feed upon such husks, after we once came to have a relish of that bread.

Ah! how little satisfaction can all our pretty notions, and fine-spun controversies, yield to a soul that truly hungers and thirsts after righteousness? How pitiful, flatly, and insipidly will they taste, in comparison of the divine entertainments of the spiritual life?

Were we but seriously taken up with the substantials of our religion, we should not have leisure for the talking, disputing divinity; we should have greater matters to take up our thoughts, and more profitable arguments to furnish out our discourses. So long as we could busy ourselves in working out our salvation, and furthering the salvation of others, we should think it but a mean employment to spend our time in spinning fine nets, for the catching of flies.

Besides,

Beſides, this divine life, if it once took place in us, would ſtrangely dilate and enlarge our hearts in charity towards our brethren; it would make us open our arms wide to the whole creation; it would perfectly work out of us all that peeviſhneſs and fourneſs, and penuriouſneſs of ſpirit, which we do too often contract, by being addicted to a ſect; and would make us ſweet and benign, and obliging, and ready to receive and embrace all conditions of men. In a word, it would quite ſwallow up all diſtinctions of parties; and whatever did but bear upon it the image of God, and the ſuperſcription of the holy Jeſus, would need no other commendatories to our affection, but would upon that account alone be infinitely dear and precious to us.

Let us all therefore earneſtly contend after this divine principle of holineſs; let us bring down religion from our heads to our hearts, from ſpeculation to practice: Let us make it our buſineſs heartily to love God, and do his will, and then may we hope to ſee peace in our days.

This, this is that that will reſtore to the world the golden age of primitive chriſtianity, when the love and unity of the diſciples of Jeſus was ſo conſpicuous and remarkable, that it became a proverb, *See how the Chriſtians love one another!* This, this is that that will bring in the accompliſhment of all thoſe glorious promiſes of peace and tranquillity that Chriſt hath made to his church: Then ſhall the wolf dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid: Then ſhall not Ephraim envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim; but we ſhall turn our ſwords into plough-ſhares, and our ſpears into pruning-hooks;

hooks; and there will be no more consuming or devouring in all God's holy mountain.

I should now proceed to the second general point in my proposed method of handling this text, viz. To set before you the very great engagements and obligations we have upon us to follow after the things that make for peace; and that,

1. From the nature and contrivance of our religion.
2. From the great weight the scripture lays upon this duty.
3. From the great unreasonableness of our religious differences.
4. From the very evil consequences that attend them: As, 1. In that they are great hindrances of a good life. 2. They are very pernicious to the civil peace of the state. 3. They are highly opprobrious to christianity in general. And 4. and lastly, very dangerous to the protestant religion, as giving too many advantages, and too much encouragement to the factors of the papacy.

But I have, I fear, already exceeded the limits of a sermon, and therefore shall add no more.

God open our eyes, that we may, in this our day, understand the things that belong to peace, before they be hid from our eyes.

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SERMON II.

The Profitableneſs of Godlineſs: Or, The Advantages of Piety, for the promoting all Mens Intereſts in this World.

1 Tim. iv. 8.

Godlineſs is profitable unto all Things, having a Promiſe of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come.

THESE words are the enforcement of an exhortation which St. Paul had made to Timothy, in the verſe before-going, which was, that he ſhould *avoid prophane and old wives fables*; meaning thoſe impious and ſuperſtitious doctrines, and the carnal and unchriſtian obſervances, that were grounded upon them (ſome of which he had mentioned in the begining of this chapter) which ſome at that time did endea-

endeavour to introduce into christianity: And instead of applying his mind to these, that he should rather exercise himself unto true godliness.

This was the exhortation. The arguments wherewith he enforceth it are two: First, the unprofitableness of these carnal and superstitious doctrines and practices. *Bodily exercise* (saith he) *profiteth little.* Secondly, The real usefulness of solid virtue and godliness, to all the purposes of life. *Godliness is profitable to all things, having a promise of this life, as well as of that which is to come.*

I shall not here meddle at all with the former part of the apostle's exhortation, or the argument that hath relation to it; but shall apply myself wholly to the latter, craving leave most plainly and affectionately to press upon you the exercise of godliness, upon those grounds and considerations on which the apostle here recomended it.

Indeed to a man that considers well, it will appear the most unaccountable thing in the world, that among all those several exercises that mankind busy themselves about, this of godliness should be in so so great a measure neglected: That men should be so diligent, so industrious, so unwearied, some in getting estates, others in purveying for pleasure, others in learning arts and trades, all in some thing or other relating to this sensible world; and so few should study to acquaint themselves with God, and the concernments of their souls, to learn the arts of virtue and religious conversation.

Certain it is, this piece of skill is not more above our reach than many of those other things we so industriously pursue; nay, I am apt to think it is more within our power than most of them; for in our other

labours we cannot always promiſe to ourſelves certain ſucceſs; a thouſand things may intervene which we know not of, that may defeat all our plots and deſigns, though never ſo carefully laid; but no man ever ſeriouſly undertook the buſineſs of religion, but he accompliſhed it.

Nay, farther, as we can with greater certainty, ſo can we with leſs pains and difficulty, promiſe to ourſelves ſucceſs in this affair, than we can hope to compaſs moſt of our worldly deſigns, which ſo much take up our thoughts. I doubt not in the leaſt, but that leſs labour, leſs trouble, leſs ſolicitude will ſerve to make a man a good Chriſtian, than to get an eſtate, or to attain a competent ſkill in human arts and ſciencies.

And then for other motives, to oblige us to the the ſtudy of religion, we have incomparably more and greater than we can have for the purſuit of any other thing. It is certainly the greateſt concernment we have in the world. It is the very thing God ſent us into the world about. It is the very thing that his Son came down from heaven to inſtruct us in. It is the very thing by which we ſhall be concluded everlaſtingly happy, or everlaſtingly miſerable, after this life is ended.

Theſe things well conſidered, may juſtly (I ſay) ſtand amazed, that men ſhould be ſo prodigiouſly ſupine and negligent in an affair of this nature and importance, as we ſee they generally are.

If there can any account be given of this matter, I ſuppoſe it muſt be ſome ſuch as this: That the things of this world upon which we beſtow our care, our time, our courtſhip, are preſent to us. We ſee them every day before our eyes; we taſte, we feel

the ſweetneſs of them; we are ſenſible that their enjoyment is abſolutely neceſſary to our preſent well-being. But as for ſpiritual matters, they lie under a great diſadvantage: They appear to us as at a great diſtance: we do not apprehend any preſent need we have of them: Nor do we fanſy any ſweetneſs or reliſh in them: nay, on the contrary, we form the moſt frightful and diſmal images of them that can be. We look upon them not only as flat and unſavoury; but as things which, if we trouble our heads too much about, will certainly ruin all our deſigns in this world. We think religion good for nothing but to ſpoil good company; to make us melancholy and mopiſh; to diſtract us in our buſineſs and employments; and to put ſo many reſtraints upon us, that we can neither with that freedom nor ſucceſs, purſue our temporal concernments, which we think neceſſary to our happineſs in this world.

But let us ſuppoſe things to be thus with religion as we have fanſied, yet cannot this be any reaſonable excuſe for our careleſsneſs about it. What though there were no viſible benefit by a religious life in this world? What though the rewards of our pains about it, were only in reverſion? Yet ſince a time will come when it will be our greateſt intereſt to have been heartily religious, is it not a madneſs now to neglect it? What tho' religion be a courſe of life difficult and unpleaſant; a way ſtrewed with bryars and thorns; a way which if we follow we are certainly loſt, as to our hopes of any thing here? Yet ſince a time will certainly come when we ſhall wiſh that we had been good Chriſtians, though we had loſt our right eyes and our right hands upon the condition; when we ſhall wiſh that we had purchaſed virtue, tho'

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at the loſs of the whole world: for God's ſake why ſhould we not be of the ſame mind now? Who but fools and children but will look upon that, which ſhall certainly and unavoidably be, with the ſame regard, as if it was now preſent?

But, indeed, this is not the caſe of religion; this buſineſs of piety is not ſo formidable, as we often repreſent it. It is no ſuch enemy to our temporal deſigns. It is a very innocent thing, and will do us no harm; tho' we look no farther than this preſent world. It will hinder none of our delights or pleaſures; but will allow us to gratify every appetite that God and nature hath put into us. And if any man doubt this, let him name that natural deſire, which the chriſtian religion doth forbid, or any way hinder the innocent ſatisfaction of: I am confident he ſhall be able to name none. Since this is the caſe then, how much more childiſh than children, ſhall we appear, if we make ſo little reckoning of it? How inexcuſably fooliſh ſhall we be, if we will not be at ſome pains to poſſeſs ourſelves of that which will be no manner of hindrance to us in our affairs in this world, and will infallibly make us everlaſtingly happy in that which is to come?

But farther; what if it be certain, that a life of ſtrict virtue is not only no hindrance to our temporal deſigns, but a great furtherance of them? What if it can be proved, that beſides the influence it has on our happineſs in the next life, it is alſo the beſt thing in the world to ſerve our turns in this? And that nothing can ſo much contribute to the bringing about our wordly aims, no ſuch ready way to attain to what our very fleſh and blood moſt deſires, moſt delights in, as to be ſincerely pious? What imagi-

nable pretence can we have then for our contempt of God and virtue? If this can be made to appear, ſure all our objections will be fully anſwered; all our ſcruples ſatisfied; all our prejudices againſt religion wholly removed, and every one that is not abandoned of his fortune and his ſenſes, as well as his reaſon, muſt think himſelf concerned to become a votary to it; ſince he can have no temptation or motive to vice, which will not more powerfully draw him to virtue; and all the ends that the one can pretend to ſerve, will much more effectually be ſerved by the other; and he eſcapes an eternity of miſery, and gets everlaſting life into the bargain.

I think it, therefore, worth the while to ſpend the time now allotted me, in making good this point, and diſcovering ſomething at leaſt of that univerſal profitableneſs of godlineſs, to the purpoſes of human life, that St. Paul in my text aſſures us of.

But becauſe the ſtudies of men are ſo infinitely various, and the ends of life to be ſerved ſo many, that it will be impoſſible to ſpeak particularly of them; it will be needful to pitch upon ſome general heads, ſuch as, if they do not comprehend all, may yet take in moſt of thoſe things, to which the labours and endeavours of men are directed, and in the acquiſition of which they have compaſſed their deſigns; and to ſhew the ſerviceableneſs of religion above all other means, for the attaining of them. And I think I cannot pitch better than upon theſe three noted idols of the world, *wealth*, *honour*, and and *pleaſure*; theſe being the goods which have always been accounted to divide mankind among them; and into the ſervice of ſome one or all of which, all that ſet up for a happy life in this world, do liſt themſelves, how

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different and disagreeing soever they be from one another as to their particular employments and ways of living. I shall therefore make it appear, that godliness and religion, is a very great furtherance to the acquisition of all these; and that no man can take a more ready way, either to improve his fortune, or to purchase a name and reputation among men, or to live comfortably and pleasantly in this world, than heartily to serve God, and to live in the practice of every virtue.

And in the first place, I begin with the *conduciveness of religion and godliness, to improve our outward fortunes*; the advantages of it for the getting or increasing an estate; for this is the thing to which our thoughts are commonly first directed, as looking upon it as the foundation of a happy life in this world.

But here I desire not to be mistaken; I would not be thought to deal with you, as one of our ordinary empiricks, that promises many brave feats in his bill, which are, indeed, beyond the power of his art: I do not pretend that wealth and opulency are necessarily entailed upon religion; so that whoever is good, shall presently be enabled to make purchaces, and to leave lands and livings to his children. Riches are one of those things that are not so perfectly in our power, that all men may hope for an equal share of them. The having more or less depends oftentimes not so much upon ourselves, as upon that condition and quality in which we were born, the way and course of life into which our friends put us; and a hundred accidental circumstances, to which ourselves contribute nothing. But this I say, supposing the virtuous man in equal circumstances with others, supposing him to

ſtand upon the ſame level, and to enjoy the ſame fortuitous hits and external concurrences that they do, and he ſhall by many odds have the advantage of them for thriving and improving in the world in any condition of life whatſoever.

So that, ſo far as the getting of riches depends upon human endeavours; ſo far as it is an art, and falls under precepts and directions, no man alive can propoſe a better expedient in order thereto, than a ſerious practice of religion.

To make this good, let it be conſidered, that as to the means that do in a more direct and immediate manner influence upon the getting or improving an eſtate (I ſpeak of general means, ſuch as are of uſe in all conditions of life; for to meddle with the myſteries of any particular art or trade, is not my purpoſe, as, indeed, it is beyond my ſkill:) as to ſuch means as theſe, I ſay, none can preſcribe more effectual than theſe four:

1. Prudence in adminiſtring our affairs.
2. Diligence in that vocation wherein God hath placed us.
3. Thrift and good huſbandry.
4. Keeping a good correſpondence with thoſe in whoſe power it is to hinder or promote our affairs.

If now it do appear that godlineſs doth highly improve a man in all theſe four reſpects; if it can be ſhewed, that all theſe fruits naturally grow and thrive better in a religious ſoil than in any other, it will evidently follow, that ſuppoſing theſe above-named means do indeed contribute to the making of a fortune, (and if they do not, no man knows what doth; and we ſtrangely abuſe our friends and our children, when upon

upon that account we recommend them to them (it follows, I say, that a life of godliness is a mighty advantage to a man, for the purposes I am speaking of.

And first of all, it will be easy to shew, that *Godliness doth above all things tend to make a man wise and prudent, skilful and dexterous in the management of his affairs of what nature soever.* For it doth very much clear and improve a man's understanding, not only by a certain natural efficacy it hath, (as I shall shew hereafter) to purify the blood and spirits, upon which the perfection of our intellectual operations doth exceedingly much depend; but also by dispelling those adventitious clouds that arise in the discerning faculty from the noisome fumes of lust and passion.

All vice, in the very nature of it, depraves and distorts a man's judgment, fills our minds with prejudices, and false apprehensions of things; and no man that is under the dominion of it, can possibly have such a free use of his reason as otherwise he might; for he will commonly see things, not as they are in themselves, but in those disguises and false colours which his passion puts upon them: Upon which account he cannot avoid but he will be often imposed upon, and commit a thousand errors in the management of his affairs, which the virtuous man, whose reason is pure and untinctured, is secured from. It cannot be imagined, that either he should foresee events so clearly, or spy opportunities so sagaciously, or weigh things so impartially, or deliberate so calmly, or transact so cautiously, as the man that is free from those manifold prepossessions which his mind is fraught with.

We see this every day verified in men of all ranks and conditions, of all callings and employments. What a multitude of inconveniencies, as to matter of dealing between man and man, doth an intemperate appetite betray men to? How silly and foolish is the most shrewd man, when wine hath gotten into his head? There is none so simple in his company, but supposing him to be sober, and to have designs upon him, he shall be able to over-reach him. What a world of advantages doth the angry man give to him he deals with, by the hastiness and impatience of his spirit? How often doth a man do that in the fury and expectancies of lust, for which when his ardours are over, he is ready to bite his nails for very vexation?

It is thus, more or less, with all kind of vices: they craze a man's head, and cast a mist before his eyes, and make him often lose himself in those very ways wherein he pretends to be most skilful: So that it cannot be denied that virtue is of a singular use in all matters wherein we have occasion to make use of our reason, and doth secure us from a multitude of indiscretions, which without it we should unavoidably commit.

But secondly, *Godliness is also an excellent means to secure a man's diligence in the discharge of his calling and employment*; which is also a matter of very great consequence, in order to our thriving in the world: For it is the *diligent hand that maketh rich*, and the *man that is diligent in his business, that shall stand before kings*, as *Solomon* tells us.

Now the obligations that religion layeth upon us to be careful in this point, are far stronger than what can arise from any other respect or consideration whatsoever; for it obligeth us to mind our business, not only for our own, but for God's sake: It chargeth the mat-

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ter upon our consciences, and represents it to us as a part of that service we owe to our Creator; upon the due performance of which, no less than the everlasting welfare of our souls doth depend: For it assures us, that he that will call us to account for every idle word, will much more do so, for the idle expence of our time, and the abuse and not-improvement of those talents that he hath intrusted us with. So that though we had no worldly inducement to make us diligent in our callings, though we were sure we should suffer no prejudice in our temporal affairs by idleness, and the neglect of our business, (the fear of which yet is the only principle that puts worldly men upon action) nevertheless we are infinitely concerned, not to be slack or negligent in this matter, in regard it is a point that will be so severely exacted of us in the other world.

I know but one objection that can be made against this discourse, and it is this, That what engagement soever religion lays upon us to the careful spending of our time, yet its own exercises, prayer, and reading, and meditation, take up so great a portion of it, which might be spent in the works of our ordinary employment, that in effect it rather hinders our attendance on our business than promotes it. But to this it is easily answered, That there is no man so engaged in the world, but may, if he please, make both his business and his devotions consist together, without prejudicing of either.

They have very false apprehensions of religion, that think it obliges us to be always upon our knees, or always poring upon some good book: No, we do as truly serve God, and perform acts of religion, when we

we labour honeſtly in our vocation, as when we go to church, or ſay our prayers.

It is true, indeed, we ought to have our hearts in heaven as much as poſſible, and to that end we ought to pray continually; but what hinders, but we may do this in the midſt of our buſineſs? There is no employment doth ſo entirely engroſs a man's mind, but he may find leiſure, if he pleaſe, many times a day, to entertain good thoughts, to quicken and reinforce his purpoſes, to caſt up a ſhort prayer, or a wiſh to God Almighty. And this I dare ſay for your encouragement, that ſuch a devout frame of heart, ſuch frequent and ſudden dartings of your ſouls to God, while you are at your buſineſs, will be ſo far from hindering or diſtracting you in it, that they will make you go about it with much more vigour and alacrity.

But farther, I would aſk any man that makes the foreſaid objection, ſuppoſing religion ten times more expenſive of our time than it really is, yet whether vice and ſin be not much more ſo, than it would be?

What a multitude of idle avocations from, and interruptions in our buſineſs doth that daily occaſion unto men! What a number of impertinent diſcourſes, unprofitable viſits, needleſs points of gallantry, long diverſions by drink, and play, and company; not to mention a great many other debauches, doth it frequently engage men in! And yet theſe we count no hindrance to our buſineſs; theſe we complain not of: but to ſpend a quarter of that time in ſome devout exerciſe, this is intolerable, it waſtes too much of our time; our occaſions will not permit it. Such partial and unjuſt eſtimators of things are we. But I proceed;

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In the third place then, as for *frugality* and *good husbandry*, which is another neceſſary requiſite for the getting of wealth. Religion is unqueſtionably the beſt miſtreſs of it in the world; for it retrencheth all the exorbitances and wantonneſſes of our deſires, which are the things that pick the money out of our purſes, and teacheth us to live after the meaſures of nature, which every body knows are little and cheap. It perfectly cuts off all thoſe idle expences with which the eſtates of other men ſtand almoſt continually charged. The modeſty of it cloaths us at a ſmall rate; and its temperance ſpreads for us, though a neat, yet a frugal table. The attendance it requires on our buſineſs, will not allow us to embezzle our money in drinking or gaming: Nor will that purity which is inſeparable from it, ever let us know what the vaſt and ſinking expences of lewdneſs and uncleanneſs are. In a word, it is vice only that is the chargeable thing; it is only ſhame and repentance that men buy at ſuch coſtly rates. Godlineſs is ſaving and full of good huſbandry; nor has it any known or unknown ways of ſpending, except it be thoſe of charity, which indeed, in proper ſpeaking, are not ſo much expence, as uſury; for money ſo laid out, doth always, even in this life, return to us with advantage.

The fourth and laſt means I mentioned of thriving in the world, was the *keeping a good correſpondence with all thoſe, in whoſe power it is to hinder or promote our affairs.* This every body knows to be a prime point in policy; and indeed it is of a large extent, and of continual uſe. No man can be ſuppoſed ſo independent on others, but that as he is ſome way beholden to them for all that he has, ſo he ſtands in need of their help and concurrence for all that he

hopes for. Men do not make their fortunes of themſelves, nor grow rich by having treaſures dropped in their laps; but they do it by the benefit of human ſociety, by the mutual aſſiſtances and good offices that one man performs for another. So that whoever intends to thrive in the world, it above all things imports him ſo to carry himſelf towards all that he hath any commerce with, ſo far to ſecure their favour and good-will, that they may be obliged not to deny him any of thoſe aſſiſtances, which the exigency of his affairs calls for at their hands. But how, how this ſhould be done any otherwiſe, than by being truly juſt and honeſt, by abſtaining from violence and injury, by being true to our truſt, and faithful in performing our contracts; and in a word, by doing all thoſe good offices to others, which we expect they ſhould do unto us, which, as our Saviour tells us, is the ſum of religion; is a very hard thing to conceive.

The uſefulneſs, or rather the neceſſity of ſuch a behaviour as this, in order to the gaining the good opinion of others, and ſo ſerving our own ends by them, is ſo univerſally acknowledged, that even thoſe that make no real conſcience of theſe things, are yet nevertheleſs, in all their dealings, forced to pretend to them. Open and bare-faced knavery, rarely ſerves a man's turn in this world; but it is under the maſk of virtue and honeſty, that it uſually performs thoſe feats it doth; which is no leſs than a demonſtration of the conduciveneſs of thoſe things, to promote our temporal intereſts; for if the mere pretence to them be a great advantage to us for this purpoſe, it cannot be imagined, but that the reality of them will be a greater. Certainly the power of godlineſs will be able to do more than the form alone; and that if

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it was upon no other account than this, that no man that is but a mere pretender to honesty, can long hope to keep his credit among men. It is impossible to act a part for any long time; let him carry it never so cunning, his vizor will some time or other be thrown off, and he will appear in his true colours, and to what a world of mischiefs and inconveniencies he will then be exposed, every one that knows how hated, how detested, how abandon'd by every one a knave and a villain is, may easily determine. I hope I need say no more to convince you that religion is the best policy; and that the more hearty and conscientious any man is in the practice of it, the more likely he is to thrive and improve in the world.

So that now I may proceed to the second general point to be spoken to, which is, *The profitableness of religion for the attaining a good name and reputation.* How very much it conduceth to this purpose, will appear from these two considerations:

First, it lays the surest grounds and foundations for a good name and reputation.

Secondly, men are generally so just to it, that it rarely misses of a good name and reputation.

The first is an argument from reason; the second from experience.

First of all, godliness layeth the truest foundation, for a fair reputation in the world. There are but two things that can give a man a title to the good opinion and respects of men; the inward worth and dignity of his person, and his usefulness and serviceableness to others. The first of these challengeth mens esteem, the other their love. Now both these qualities religion and virtue do eminently possess us of.

For,

For, first, the religious man is certainly the most worthy and excellent person: for he, of all others, lives most up to the great end for which he was designed, which is the natural measure of the goodness and worth of things.

Whatever external advantages a man may have, yet if he be not endow'd with virtuous qualities, he is far from having any true worth or excellence, and consequently cannot be a fit object of our praise and esteem; because he wants that which should make him perfect and good in his kind. For it is not a comely personage, or a long race of famous ancestors, or a large revenue, or a multitude of servants, or many swelling titles, or any other thing without a man, that speaks him a compleat man, or makes him to be what he should be: But the right use of his reason, the employing his liberty and choice to the best purposes, the exercising his powers and faculties about the fittest objects, and in the most due measures; these are the things that make him excellent. Now none can be said to do this, but only he that is virtuous.

Secondly, religion also is that which makes a man most useful and profitable to others; for it effectually secures his performance of all those duties whereby both the security and welfare of the public, and also the good and advantage of particular persons, are most attained.

It makes men lovers of their country, loyal to their prince, obedient to laws: It is the surest bond and preservative of society in the world: It obliges us to live peaceably, and to submit ourselves to our rulers, not only for wrath, but also for conscience-sake: It renders

renders us modeſt and governable in proſperity, and reſolute and courageous to ſuffer bravely in a good cauſe, in the worſt of times: It teacheth us to endeavour, as much as in us lies, to promote the good of every particular member of the community, to be inflexibly upright, to do hurt to none, but good offices to all; to be charitable to the bodies and ſouls of men, to do all manner of kindneſſes that lie within our power: It takes off the ſourneſs and moroſeneſs of our ſpirits, and makes us affable and courteous, gentle and obliging, and willing to embrace with open arms, and an hearty love, all ſorts and conditions of men.

In every relation wherein we can ſtand to one another, it influenceth upon us, in order to the making us more uſeful: It makes parents kind and indulgent, and careful of the education of their children; and children loving and obedient to their parents: It makes ſervants diligent to pleaſe their maſters, and to do their work in ſingleneſs of heart, not with eye-ſervice, as men-pleaſers, but as unto God; and it makes maſters gentle and forbearing, and careful to make proviſion for their family; as thoſe that know they have a maſter in heaven, that is no reſpecter of perſons. In a word, there is no condition or capacity, in which religion will not be ſignally an inſtrument of making us more ſerviceable to others, and of doing more good in the world. And if ſuch be the ſpirit and temper of it, how is it poſſible, but it muſt needs acquire a great deal of reſpect and love, from all ſorts of men? If obligingneſs and doing good in one's generation do not endear a man to thoſe that know him, do not entitle him to their love and affections, what thing in the world is there that is likely to do it?

But

But secondly, true and unaffected goodness seldom misses of a good reputation in the world. How unjust to virtue soever men are in other respects, yet in this they generally give it its due; where-ever it appears, it generally meets with esteem and approbation; nay, it has the good word of many that otherwise are not over-fond of religion: Though they have not the grace to be good themselves, yet they rarely have the confidence not to commend goodness in others.

Add to this, that no man ever raised to himself a good name in the world, but it was upon the score of his virtues, either real or pretended. Vice hath sometimes got riches, and advanced itself into preferments; but it never was accounted honourable in any nation.

It must be acknowledged, indeed, that it may, and doth sometimes happen, that vicious men may be had in esteem; but then it is to be considered, that it is not for their vices that they are esteemed; but for some good quality or other they are eminent in. And there is no doubt, if those men were without those vices, their reputation would be so far from being thereby diminished, that it would become much more considerable.

It must also be acknowledged on the other hand, that even virtuous and good men may sometimes fail of that esteem and respect that their virtue seems to merit; nay, in that degree, as to be slighted and despised, and to have many odious terms and nicknames put upon them: But when we consider the cases in which this happens, it will appear to be of no force at all, for the disproving what has been now delivered. For, first, it ought to be considered what kind of persons those are that treat virtue and virtuous men

men thus contemptuouſly; we ſhall always find them to be the worſt and the vileſt of mankind; ſuch who have debauched the natural principles of their minds, have loſt all the notions and diſtinctions of good and evil, are fallen below the dignity of human nature, and have nothing to bear up themſelves with but boldneſs and confidence, drollery and ſcurrility, and turning into ridicule every thing that is grave and ſerious. But it is with theſe, as it is with the monſters and extravagancies of nature, they are but very few: Few in compariſon with the reſt of mankind, who have wiſer and truer ſentiments of things: But if they were more numerous, no man of underſtanding would value what ſuch men ſaid of him. It looks like a crime, to be commended by ſuch perſons; and may juſtly occaſion a man to reflect upon his own actions, and to cry out to himſelf, as he did of old, What have I done, that theſe men ſpeak well of me?

But ſecondly, it cannot be denied, but that ſome perſons, who are otherwiſe virtuous and religious, may be guilty of ſuch indiſcretions as thereby to give occaſion to ſlight and deſpiſe them. But then it is to be conſidered, that this is not to be charged upon virtue and religion, but is the particular fault of the perſons: Every one that is religious, is not prudent; the meanneſs of a man's underſtanding, or his raſh and intemperate zeal, or the moroſeneſs of his temper, or his too great ſcrupuloſity about little things, may ſometimes make his behaviour uncouth and fantaſtic, and betray him to do many actions, which we may think his religion obliges him to, that other people will be apt to fanſy ſilly and ridiculous: But this doth not at all reflect upon religion; nor doth it follow, that becauſe the imprudence of this or the other particular

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man expoſes him to the mirth and the pleaſantneſs of others, that therefore all religious perſons muſt fall under the ſame fate: Moſt certainly religion, where-ever it is governed by knowledge and ſound principles, where-ever it is managed with prudence and diſcretion, is a thing ſo noble, ſo amiable, that it attracts love, and commands reſpect from all that are acquainted with it, unleſs they be ſuch profligately wicked perſons, as I juſt now ſpoke of.

There is one objection, made from the Scripture, againſt this and the former point I have been ſpeaking to, which I deſire to remove before I proceed to the third general head of my diſcourſe. It is this; that the Scripture is ſo far from repreſenting godlineſs as a means to improve our fortunes, or attain a reputation in the world, that it ſeems directly to affirm the contrary; for it aſſures us, that, *All thoſe that will live godly in Chriſt, muſt ſuffer perſecution:* That *the diſciples of Chriſt ſhall be hated of all men, for his name's-ſake:* That *the world ſhall revile and perſecute them, and ſpeak all manner of evil of them:* And that *thro' many tribulations we muſt enter into the kingdom of God.*

But to this it is eaſily anſwered, that theſe and other ſuch like paſſages of Scripture do not ſpeak the general and common fate that attends godlineſs in all times and places of the world, according to the ordinary courſe of God's providence, but only refer to that particular time, when Chriſtianity was to be planted in the world; then, indeed, perſecution and diſgrace, loſs of goods, and even of life itſelf, was to be the common portion of thoſe that profeſſed it. Nor could it otherwiſe be expected; for when a new religion

religion is to be set up, and such a religion as is perfectly destructive of all those others that have been by long custom received, and are by laws established in the world, it cannot be imagined, but that it will meet with a great deal of contradiction and opposition from all sorts of persons. But this was a peculiar and extraordinary case, and could but last for a certain time: Now that Christianity hath obtained in the world, and is adopted into the laws of kingdoms, as, God be thanked, it is among us at this day; so far need we be from fearing that the practice of it will draw upon us any persecution, or such other inconveniencies as are mentioned in the fore-cited places, that there is no doubt but that we may rationally expect, from it all those external benefits and advantages, which, as we have seen, it is in its own nature apt to produce, and which God hath indeed made over to it by promise, in several passages of the Scripture, especially of the Old-testament.

For, that I may mention this by the bye, I do not conceive that those promises of long life, good days, and all manner of worldly prosperity, with which the practice of godliness is so frequently inforced in the Old-testament, were so appropriated to the jewish religion, as to be antiquated or disannulled by the introduction of the christian; but rather that they are still in force to all the purposes they were then; for that the coming of Christ into the world, did add many great blessings and privileges to the people of God, which before they had not, we are certain of: But that it took away from them any that before they had, this we no where read; nor indeed is it probable.

But I hasten to the third and last general head I am to speak to, which is, *The excellent ministries of religion*,

gion, above all other things, to the pleasures of human life. Which point, if it be clearly made out, I do not see what can be farther wanting to recommend it unto us, as the most effectual instrument for the serving all our turns in this world. Now that godliness doth, indeed, make the most excellent provisions for all sorts of pleasures, will appear by these four considerations:

First, That it eminently ministreth to health, which is a necessary foundation for all pleasures.

Secondly, It doth much increase the relish and sweetness of all our other pleasures.

Thirdly, It secures us from all those inquietudes and disturbances which are apt to imbitter our pleasures, and make our lives uncomfortable.

Fourthly, It adds to human Life a world of pleasures of its own, which those that are not possessed of it, are utterly unacquainted with.

First of all, *Godliness doth very much conduce to health:* Which is so necessary to our enjoyment of any sensible good, that without it, neither riches, nor honours, nor any thing that we esteem most gratifying to our senses, will signify any thing at all to us. Now that a sound and healthful constitution does exceedingly much depend upon a discreet government and moderation of our appetites and passions, upon a sober and temperate use of all God's creatures, which is an essential part of true religion, is a thing so evident, that I need make no words about it. What are most of our diseases and infirmities, that make us miserable and unpity'd while we live, and cut us off in the midst of our days, and transmit weakness and rottenness to our posterity, but the effects of our excesses and debauches, our wantonnesses and luxury? Cer-

Certainly, if we would obſerve thoſe meaſures in our diet, and in our labours, in our paſſions, and in our pleaſures, which religion has bound us up to, we might to ſuch a degree preſerve our bodies, as to render the greateſt part of phyſick perfectly ſuperfluous. But theſe things are too well known to need to be inſiſted on: I therefore paſs on to the next thing;

Secondly, *A life of religion doth very much increaſe the reliſh and ſweetneſs of all our ſenſible enjoyments.* So far it is from abridging us of any of our earthly delights, (as its enemies ſlanderouſly repreſent it) that it abundantly heightens them. It doth not only indulge to us the free uſe of all thoſe good creatures of God which he hath made for the ſupport and comfort of mankind, while they are in theſe earthly bodies; but alſo makes them more exquiſitely gratifying and delightful, than without it they could poſſibly be. And this it doth in part by the means of that never-ſufficiently commended temperance and moderation I before ſpoke of; for hereby it comes to paſs, that our ſenſes, which are the inſtruments of our pleaſures, are always preſerved in that due purity and quickneſs, that is abſolutely neceſſary for the right performing of their offices, and the rendering our perceptions of any thing grateful and agreeable: Whereas the ſenſual and voluptuous man defeats his own deſigns, and whilſt he thinks to enjoy a greater ſhare of pleaſures than other men, really enjoys a leſs; for his diſſoluteneſs, and giving up the reins to his appetites, only ſerves to dull and ſtupify them. Nor doth he reap any other benefit from his continual hankering after bodily pleaſures, but that his ſenſations of them are hereby made altogether flat and unaffecting. Neither is his meat half ſo ſavoury,

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nor his recreations so diverting, nor his sleep so sweet, nor the company he keeps so agreeable, as theirs are, that by following the measures of nature and reason, come to them with truer and more unforced appetites.

But besides this, there is a certain lightsomeness and chearfulness of mind, which is in a manner peculiar to the truly religious soul, that above all things sets off our pleasures, and makes all the actions and perceptions of human life sweet and delightful. True piety is the best cure of melancholy in the world; nothing comparable to it for dispelling the lumpishness and inactivity, that renders the soul of a man uncapable of enjoying either itself or any thing else. It fills the soul with perpetual light and vigour, infuseth a strange kind of alacrity and gayety of humour into us. And this it doth not only by removing those things that hinder our mirth, and make us languish in the midst of our festivities (such as are the pangs of an evil conscience, and the storms of unmortified passions, of which I shall speak in the following particular) but even by a more physical efficiency. It hath really a mighty power to correct and exalt a man's natural temper. Those ardent breathings and workings wherewith the pious soul is continually carried out after God and virtue, are to the body like so much fresh air and wholesome exercise; they fan the blood, and keep it from settling; they clarify the spirits, and purge them from those grosser feculencies which would otherwise cloud our understandings, and make us dull and listless. And to these effects of religion doth *Solomon* seem to allude, when he tells us, that *wisdom maketh a man's face to shine*, Eccles. viii. 1.

Where

Where he ſeems to intimate, that that purity and exaltation into which the blood and ſpirits of a man are wrought by the exerciſe of virtue and devotion, doth diffuſe itſelf even to his outward viſage, making the countenance clear and ſerene, and filling the eyes with an unuſual kind of ſplendor and vivacity. But whether this be a true comment on his words or no, certain it is, that piety diſpoſeth a man to mirth and lightneſs of heart, above all things in the world: And how admirable a reliſh this doth give to all our other pleaſures and enjoyments, there is none but can eaſily diſcern.

Thirdly, let it be farther conſidered, that godlineſs is a moſt effectual antidote againſt all thoſe inquietudes, and evil accidents, that do either wholly deſtroy, or very much embitter, the pleaſures of this life.

For whilſt it teacheth us to place all our happineſs in God Almighty and ourſelves only, whilſt we have learned to bring all our affections and paſſions, our deſires and averſions, our hopes and fears, under the command of our reaſon; and endeavour not ſo much to ſuit things to our wills, as our wills to things, being indifferent to all events that can happen; ſave only, that we always judge thoſe beſt, which God in his providence ſends us: Being, I ſay, thus diſpoſed (as certainly religion, if it be ſuffered to have its perfect work upon us, will thus diſpoſe us) what is it that ſhall be able to diſturb or interrupt our pleaſures, or create any trouble or vexation to us? Our preſent enjoyments will not be embittered with the fear of loſing them, or leſſened by our impatient longing after greater. Our brains will not be upon the rack for compaſſing things that are perhaps impoſſible,

nor our bodies under the ſcourge of rage and anger, for every diſappointment. We ſhall not look pale with envy, that our neighbours have that which we have not, nor pine away with grief, if we ſhould happen to loſe that which we have.

But the vicious man is expoſed to all theſe miſeries, and a thouſand more; he carries that within him, which will perpetually fret and torment him; for he is a ſlave to his paſſions; and the leaſt of them, when it is let looſe upon him, is the worſt of tyrants. He is, like the troubled ſea, reſtleſs and ever working, ruffled and diſcompoſed with every thing. He is not capable of being rendered ſo much as tolerably happy, by the beſt condition this world affords: For having ſuch a world of impetuous deſires and appetites, which muſt be all ſatisfied, or elſe he is miſerable; and there being ſuch an infinite number of circumſtances that muſt concur to the giving them that ſatisfaction, and all thoſe depending upon things without him, which are perfectly out of his power; it cannot be avoided, but he will continually find matter to diſquiet him, and render his condition troubleſome and uneaſy: A thouſand unforeſeen accidents will ever be croſſing his deſigns. Nor will there be wanting ſome little thing or other, almoſt hourly, to put him out of humour.

And if this be the caſe of the vicious man, in the beſt circumſtances of this world (where the cauſes of vexation are in a manner undiſcernable) in what a miſerable condition muſt he needs be under thoſe more real afflictions unto which human life is obnoxious? What is there that ſhall be able to ſupport his ſpirit, under the tediouſneſs of a lingering ſickneſs, or the anguiſh

anguish of an acute pain? What is become of all his mirth and jollity, if there should happen a turn in his fortune? if he should fall into disgrace, or his friends forsake him, or the means of maintaining his pleasures fail him, and the miserable man become poor and despised? Not to mention a great many more evils, which will make him uncapable of any consolation, eat into the heart of his best enjoyments, and become gall and wormwood to his choicest delicacies.

And has he not now, think you, made admirable provision for his pleasures? Has he not done himself a wonderful piece of service, by freeing himself from the drudgery, as he calls it, of virtue and religion? Alas, poor man! This is the only thing that would now have secured him from all these sad accidents and displeasures. The good man sits above the reach of fortune, and, in spite of all the vicissitudes and uncertainties of this lower world, with which other men are continually alarmed, enjoys a constant and undisturbed peace. Those evils that may be avoided (and really a great many which afflict mortal men, are such) he, by his prudent conduct and government of himself, wholly prevents. And those that are unavoidable, he takes by such a handle, that they have no power to do him any harm: For he is indeed possessed of that which the alchymists in vain seek for: Such a sovereign art he has, that he can turn the basest metals into gold, make such an use of the worst accidents that can befal him, that they shall not be accounted his miseries, but his enjoyments. So that, however the varieties of his condition may occasion a change in

his pleaſures, yet can they never cauſe any loſs or deſtruction of them.

And this ſecurity he enjoys, not as ſome of the Stoicks of old pretended to do, by an imaginary inſenſibility, or by changing the names of things, calling that no evil, which really is one: But by an abſolute reſignation of himſelf to the will of God, and an hearty acquieſcing in his wiſe providence. He is certain there is a God that governs the world, and that nothing happens to him, but by his order and appointment. And he is certain alſo, that this God hath a real kindneſs for him, and would not diſpenſe any event unto him, but what is really for his good and advantage. And theſe thoughts ſo ſupport his ſpirit, that he not only bears patiently, but thanks God for whatever happens to him. And inſtead of fretting and complaining, that things ſucceed otherwiſe than he expected, he reſolves with himſelf, that that condition, whatever it be, in which he actually is, is indeed beſt for him, and that which he himſelf, were he to be the carver of his fortunes, ſuppoſing him but truly to underſtand his own concernments, would chuſe for himſelf above all others.

But farther, beſides this ſecurity from outward diſturbances, which our virtue obtains for us, there is another evil, which it alſo delivers us from, with which the wicked man is almoſt perpetually haunted, and which ſeldom ſuffers him to enjoy any ſincere, unmingled pleaſure. That which I mean is the pangs of an evil conſcience, the fears, the reſtleſsneſs, the confuſion, the amazements that ariſe in his ſoul, from the ſenſe of his crimes, and the juſt apprehenſions of the ſhame and vengeance that doth await them, poſſibly in this life, but moſt certainly in the life to come.

How

How happy, how prosperous soever the sinner be as to his other affairs, yet these furies he shall be sure to be plagued with: No pompousness of condition, no costly entertainments, no noise of company, will be able to drive them away. Every man that is wicked, cannot but know that he is so; and that very knowledge is a principle of perpetual anguish and disquietude. Be his crimes never so secret, yet he cannot be confident they will always continue so, and the very apprehension of this makes him feel all the shame and amazement of a present discovery. But put the case, he hath had the luck to sin so closely, or in such a nature, that he need fear nothing from men; yet he knows there is an offended God, to whom he hath a sad and a fearful reckoning to make; a God too just to be bribed, too mighty to be over-awed, too wise to be imposed upon. And is not the man, think you, under such reflections as these, likely to live a very comfortable life? Ah! none knows the bitterness of them, but himself that feels them. To the judgment of others, he perhaps appears a very happy man: he hath the world at his beck, all things seem to conspire to make him a great example of prosperity; we admire, we applaud his condition. But ah! we know not how sad a heart he often carries under this fair out-side: We know not with what sudden damps his spirit is often struck, even in the height of his revellings. We know not how unquiet, how broken his sleeps are, how oft he starts and looks pale; when the wife that lies by his side understands not what the matter is with him.

He doth, indeed, endeavour all he can to stifle his cares, and to stop the mouth of his conscience. He thinks to divert it with business, or to flatter it with

little ſophiſtries, or to drown it with rivers of wine, or to calm it with ſoft and gentle airs. And he is, indeed, ſometimes ſo ſucceſsful in theſe arts, as for a while to lay it aſleep. But, alas! this is no laſting peace; the leaſt thing awakens it, even the ſound of a paſſing-bell, or a clap of thunder; nay, a frightful dream, or a melancholy ſtory, hath the power to do it, and then the poor man returns to his torment.

And now judge you, whether the honeſt and virtuous man, that is free from all theſe agonies, that is at peace with God, and at peace with his own conſcience; that apprehends nothing terrible from the one, nor feels any thing troubleſome from the other, but is ſafe from himſelf, and from all the world, in his own innocence: Judge, I ſay, whether ſuch a one hath not laid to himſelf better and ſurer foundations for pleaſure, and a happy life, than the man, that, by indulging his luſts and vices, only breeds up a ſnake in his boſom, which will not ceaſe to ſting and gall him beyond what a tongue is able to expreſs, or a witty cruelty to invent.

Fourthly and laſtly, Beſides the benefits of religion for removing the hindrances of our pleaſures; it alſo adds to human life a world of pleaſures of its own, which vicious men are utterly unacquainted with.

And theſe are of ſo excellent a kind, ſo delicious, ſo enraviſhing, that the higheſt gratifications of ſenſe are not comparable to them. Never till we come to be heartily religious, do we underſtand what true pleaſure is. That which ariſeth from the grateful motions that are made in our outward ſenſes, is but a faint ſhadow, a mere dream of it. Then do we begin to enjoy true pleaſures indeed, when our higheſt and di-

vineſt

vineſt faculties, which were wholly laid aſleep, while we lived the life of ſenſe, begin to be awakened, and to exerciſe themſelves upon their proper objects; when we become acquainted with God, and the infinite abyſs of good that is in him; when our hearts are made ſenſible of the great love and good-will he bears us; and in that ſenſe are powerfully carried out in joy, and love, and deſire after him. When we feel the divine nature daily more and more diſplayed in our ſouls, ſhewing forth itſelf in the bleſſed fruits of charity, and peaceableneſs, and meekneſs, and humility, and purity, and devotion, and all the other graces of the Holy Spirit. It is not poſſible, but that ſuch a life as this, muſt needs be a fountain of inexpreſſible joy to him that leads it, and fill the ſoul with tranſcendently greater content than any thing upon earth can poſſibly do: For this is the life of God, this is the life of the bleſſed angels above, this is the life that is moſt of all agreeable to our own natures. While we live thus, things are with us as they ſhould be; our ſouls are in their natural poſture, in that ſtate they were framed and deſigned to live in: Whereas the life of ſin is a ſtate of diſorder and confuſion; a perpetual violence and force upon our natures. While we live thus, we enjoy the pleaſures of men, whereas before, when we were governed by ſenſe, we could pretend to no other ſatisfactions, but what the brutes have as well as we. In this ſtate of life, we gratify our higheſt and nobleſt powers, the intellectual appetites of our ſouls; which, as they are infinitely capacious, ſo have they an infinite good to fill them: Whereas in the ſenſual life, the meaneſt, the dulleſt, and the moſt contracted faculties of our ſouls, were only provided for.

But what need I carry you out into these speculations, when your own sense and experience will ascertain you in this matter, above a thousand arguments? Do but seriously set yourselves to serve God; if you have yet never done it, do but once try what it is to live up to the precepts of reason, and virtue, and religion; and I dare confidently pronounce, that you will, in one month, find more joy, more peace, more content, to arise in your spirits, from the sense that you have resisted the temptations of evil, and done what was your duty to do, than in many years spent in vanity and a licentious course of living. I doubt not in the least, but that after you have once *seen* and *tasted how gracious the Lord is*, how good all his ways are, but you will proclaim to all the world, that *one day spent in his courts is better than a thousand:* Nay, you will be ready to cry out with the Roman orator (if it be lawful to quote the testimony of a heathen after that of the divine psalmist, that "one day lived according to the precepts of virtue, is to be preferred before an immortality of sin."

You will then alter all your sentiments of things, and wonder that you should have been so strangely abused by false representations of virtue and vice. You will then see that religion is quite another thing, than it appeared to you, before you became acquainted with it. Instead of that grim, sour, unpleasant countenance, in which you heretofore painted her to yourself, you will then discover nothing in her, but what is infinitely lovely and charming. Those very actions of religion, which you now cannot think upon with patience, they seem so harsh and unpleasant, you will then find to be accompanied with a wonderful delight. You will not then complain of the narrowness of the bounds,

bounds, or the ſcantineſs of the meaſures, that it hath confined your deſires to; for you will then find, that you have hereby gained an entrance into a far greater and more perfect liberty. How ungenteely, how much againſt the grain of nature ſoever it now looks to forgive an injury, or an affront, you will then find it, as far more eaſy, ſo far more ſweet than to revenge one. You will no longer think works of charity burthenſome or expenſive; or that to do good offices to every one is an employment too mean for you; for you will then experience, that there is no ſenſuality like that of doing good; and that it is a greater pleaſure to do a kindneſs, than to receive one. How will you chide yourſelf for having been ſo averſe to prayer, and other devout exerciſes, accounting them as tireſome, unſavoury things, when you begin to feel the delicious reliſhes they leave upon your ſpirit? You will then confeſs, that no converſation is half ſo agreeable as that which we enjoy with God Almighty in prayer; no cordial ſo reviving, as heartily to pour out our ſouls unto him. And then to be affected with his mercies, to praiſe and give thanks to him for his benefits, what is it but a very heaven upon earth, an anticipation of the joys of eternity? Nay, you will not be without your pleaſures, even in the very entrance of religion, then when you exerciſe acts of repentance, when you mourn and afflict yourſelf for your ſins, which ſeems the frightfulleſt thing in all religion. For ſuch is the nature of that holy ſorrow, that you would not for all the world be without it, and you will find far greater contentment and ſatisfaction in grieving for your offences, than ever you did receive from the committing them.

But, O the ineffable pleaſures that do continually ſpring up in the heart of a good man, from the ſenſe of God's love, and the hope of his favour, as the fair proſpect he hath of the joy and happineſs of the other world! How pleaſing, how tranſporting will the thought of theſe things be to you! To think that you are one of thoſe happy ſouls, that are, of an enemy, become the friend of God, that your ways pleaſe him, and that you are not only pardoned, but accepted and beloved by him? To think that you, a poor creature, who were of yourſelf nothing, and by your ſins had made yourſelf worſe than nothing, are yet, by the goodneſs of your Saviour, become ſo conſiderable a being, as to be able to give delight to the king of the world, and to cauſe joy in heaven among the bleſſed angels by your repentance: To think that God charges his providence with you, takes care of all your concerns, hears all your prayers, provides all things needful for you, and that he will, in his good time, take you up unto himſelf, to live everlaſtingly in his preſence, to be partaker of his glories, to be raviſhed with his love, to be acquainted with his counſels, to know and be known by angels, arch-angels, and ſeraphims, to enjoy a converſation with prophets, apoſtles, and martyrs, and all the raiſed and glorified ſpirits of brave men; and with all theſe to ſpend a happy and a rapturous eternity, in adoring, in loving, in praiſing God for the infiniteneſs of his wiſdom, and the miracles of his mercy and goodneſs to all his creatures. Can there be any pleaſure like this? Can any thing in the world put you into ſuch an extacy of joy, as the very thought of theſe things? With what a mighty ſcorn and contempt, will you in the ſenſe of them look down upon all the little gauderies, and

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fickly fatisfactions, that the men of this world keep fuch a ftir about? How empty and vain, how flat and unfavoury will the beft pleafures on earth appear to you, in compariſon of theſe divine contentments? You will perpetually rejoice, you will ſing praiſes to your Saviour, you will bleſs the day that ever you became acquainted with him; you will confeſs him to be the only maſter of pleaſure in the world, and that you never knew what it was to be an Epicure indeed, 'till you became a Chriſtian.

Thus have I gone through all thoſe heads which I at firſt propoſed to inſiſt on. What now remains, but that I reſume the apoſtle's exhortation, with which I began this diſcourſe, That ſince, as you have ſeen, *Godlineſs is ſo exceedingly profitable to all the purpoſes of this life, as well as the other*; ſince, as you have ſeen, *Length of days is in her right-hand, and in her left-hand riches and honour*; and *all her ways are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are peace*; you would alſo be perſuaded ſeriouſly to apply yourſelves to the exerciſe of it.

Which that you may do, *God of his*, &c.

SER-

SERMON III.

Of doing GOOD in our Lives; ſhewing, that it is every one's great Concernment, and is in every one's Power.

ECCLES. iii. 12.

I know that there is no Good in them, but for a Man to rejoice and to do Good in his Life.

THIS book of Eccleſiaſtes gives us an account of the ſeveral experiments that Solomon had made, in order to the finding out, wherein the happineſs of man in this world doth conſiſt: And theſe words are one of the concluſions he drew from thoſe experiments.

No man had ever greater opportunities of trying all the ways wherein men generally ſeek for contentment, than he had; and no man did ever more induſtriouſly

dustriously apply himself to, or took a greater liberty in enjoying those good things that are commonly most admired, than he did: And yet, after all his labours and all his enjoyments, he found nothing but emptiness and dissatisfaction.

He thought to become happy by philosophy; *giving his heart*, as he tells us, *to seek and search out all the things that come to pass under the sun* [a]: Yet upon trial, he found all this to be *vanity and vexation of spirit*.

He applied his mind to political wisdom, and other sorts of knowledge; and his attainments in that kind were greater than of any that were before him: Yet he experienced at last, that *in wisdom was much grief*; *and he that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow* [b].

He *proved his heart*, (as he tells us) *with mirth and wine* [c], and all sorts of sensual pleasures, to find if those were good for the sons of men: and yet so far was he from his desir'd satisfaction in these things, that he was forced to *say of laughter, that it was mad; and of mirth, what good doth it* [d]?

He turned himself to works of pomp and magnificence: He built him stately *houses*, and made him *gardens*, and *vineyards*, and *orchards*, and *fountains* [e]. He increased his possessions, and *gathered silver and gold, and the precious treasures of the kings, and of the provinces* [f]. He got him a vast retinue, and kept him the most splendid court that ever any prince of that country did: Yet (as he tells us [g]) when he came to *look upon all the works that his hands had wrought, and on*

[a] Eccles. ii. 3. [b] ver 18. [c] chap. ii. ver. 1, 3. [d] ver. 2. [e] ver. 4. [f] ver. 8. [g] ver. 11.

on the labour that he had laboured to do, behold all was vanity and vexation of ſpirit, and there was no profit under the ſun.

But wherein then is there any profit, if not in theſe things? What is that good that the ſons of men are to apply themſelves to, in order to their living as comfortably as the ſtate of things here will allow? This queſtion (after an intimation of the uncertainty and perplexedneſs of all human events; but withal, of the exactneſs of the providence of God, *who hath made every thing beautiful in its ſeaſon*) he thus reſolves in the words of the text, *I know*, (ſaith he) *that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice and do good in his life.* That is to ſay,

I have found by long experience, that all the happineſs that is to be had in the good things of this life, doth ariſe from theſe two things, *Rejoicing* in the enjoyment of them, and *doing good* to others, with them, while we live. Take away theſe two uſes, and there is no good in them.

Or, if you pleaſe, we may interpret the firſt part of his propoſition, not of things, but of men, thus; *I know there is no good in them*; *i. e.* I am convinced that there is nothing ſo good for the ſons of men; or, nothing that more contributes to their happineſs in this world, than that *every man ſhould rejoice, and do good in his life.* And to this purpoſe the words are render'd by ſeveral interpreters: But it is no matter which of the ſenſes we pitch upon, ſince in effect they come both to one thing.

Two things, then, Solomon here recommends to every one that would live comfortably in this world; *Rejoicing*, and *doing good*: And I do not know what can be more proper and ſeaſonable to be recommended

and

and insisted on to you at this time, and on this occasion, than these two things; for the putting them in practice, makes up the whole design of this meeting.

We are here so many brethren met together to *rejoice*, and to *do good*: To *rejoice* together in the sense and acknowledgment of God's mercies and blessings to us, and in the enjoyment of society one with another: And to *do good*, not only by increasing our friendship and mutual correspondence, but by joining together in a chearful contribution to those our countrymen that need our charity. To entertain you therefore upon these two points, seems to be my proper business.

But in treating of them, I shall make bold to invert the order in which they are put in the text, and shall first speak of *doing good*, though it be last named; and shall afterwards treat of *rejoicing*. The truth is, *doing good*, in the order of nature, goes before *rejoicing*; for it is the foundation of it. There can be no true joy in the possession or use of any worldly blessings, unless we can satisfy ourselves we have done some *good* with them. It is the *doing good* that sanctifies our other enjoyments, and makes them matter of *rejoicing*.

Now in treating of this argument, I shall briefly endeavour these three things:

I. I shall earnestly recommend to you the practice of *doing good*, upon several considerations.

II. I shall represent the practicableness of it, by shewing the several ways which every person (tho' in the meanest circumstances) is capable of *doing good*.

III.

III. I shall make two or three inferences, by way of application.

I begin with the first thing. *Seriously to recommend the practice of doing good.*

But where shall I begin to speak, either of the obligations that lie upon us, or of the benefits and advantages that do accrue to us by *doing good in our lives?* Or having begun, where shall I make an end? The subject is so copious, that the study of a whole life cannot exhaust it. The more we consider it, still the more and the weightier arguments will present themselves to us, to engage us in the practice of it; and the more we practise it, still the more shall we desire so to do, and the more happy and blessed shall we find ourselves to be.

For, to *do good*, is nothing else but to act according to the frame and make of our beings. It is to gratify those inclinations and appetites that are most strongly rooted in our natures; such as love and natural affection, pity and compassion, a desire of friends, and a propensity to knot ourselves into companies and societies. What are all these but so many *stimuli*, so many powerful incitements of nature, to put us upon doing good offices one to another?

To *do good* is the end of all those acquisitions, of all those talents, of all those favours and advantages that God hath blessed us with; it is the proper use we are to put them to. If we do not employ them this way, we are so far from being better for them, that we are much worse. What will signify our wit and good humour, our strength of reason and memory, our wisdom and knowledge, our skill in arts, and dexterity in managing business, our wealth and greatness,

neſs, our reputation and intereſt in the world; I ſay, what will all theſe ſignify, if they do not render us more uſeful and beneficial to others? That which ſets the price and value upon every worldly bleſſing, is the opportunity it affords us of *doing good*.

To *do good*, ſeems to be the foundation of all the laws of nature, the ſupreme univerſal law; it is that by which the world is ſupported; and take that away, all would preſently fall into confuſion. And perhaps, if it were particularly examined, it would be found, that all the other natural laws may be reduced to this, and are ultimately to be reſolved into it. It is a queſtion, whether there be any natural ſtandard, whereby we can meaſure the viciouſneſs of any action, but the influence that it hath to promote or hinder the *doing of good?* This is that, that ſeems to ſtamp virtue and vice.

To *do good*, is the great work, for the ſake of which we were ſent into the world, and no man lives farther to any purpoſe, than as he is an inſtrument of doing good. Be our lives otherwiſe never ſo buſy and full of action, yet if others receive no benefit by them, we cannot give ourſelves any tolerable account of our time, we have in effect lived idly, and done nothing.

To *do good*, is that which of all other ſervices is moſt acceptable to God: It is that which he hath laid the greateſt ſtreſs upon in the Scriptures; it is that which he hath, with the moſt earneſt and affectionate perſuaſives, with the ſtrongeſt arguments, with the greateſt promiſes, and with the moſt dreadful threatnings, enforc'd upon us; it is that which he hath choſen before all ſacrifices and all religious worſhip, ſtrictly ſo called, to be ſerved with; it is that which he hath appointed for the great expreſſion both of our thank-

thankfulneſs for his benefits, and of our love and devotion to him: Laſtly, it is that which Moſes and the prophets make the ſum of the old law, and Chriſt and his apoſtles the ſum of the new.

And very great reaſon there is for it; for to *do good*, is to become moſt like to God. It is that which of all other qualities gives us the reſemblance of his nature and perfection; [a] for perfect love and goodneſs is the very nature of God, and the root of all his other attributes; and there was never any action done, any work wrought by him, throughout the vaſt tracks of infinite ſpace, from the beginning of time to this moment, but was an expreſſion of his love, and an inſtance of *doing good*, (nay, I doubt not to ſay, the moſt ſevere acts of his juſtice and vengeance have all been ſuch.) And therefore with great reaſon hath our bleſſed Lord told us, [b] that the way to become the children of our Heavenly Father, is to do good to all, with the ſame freedom and unreſervedneſs that God makes his ſun to ſhine upon the world.

And of this our bleſſed Saviour himſelf was the moſt illuſtrious example that ever appeared in the world; ſo that to *do good*, is that which doth moſt truly and perfectly render us the diſciples and followers of Jeſus, makes us really be what we pretend we are. His whole life (as the Goſpel tells us) was but a continual going about doing good. The great deſign of his coming from heaven, and of all that he ſpoke, and of all that he did, and of all that he ſuffer'd upon earth, was the benefiting of others. And he hath left it as the great diſtinguiſhing badge and character whereby his diſciples ſhould be known from other men, that they

[a] 1 John, iv. 8. [b] Mat. v. 44, 45.

they ſhould [c] *love one another, even as he had loved them*, that is, (as his apoſtle expounds them) they ſhould love and do good to that degree, *as to lay down their lives for their brethren* [d].

But to *do good*, is not only our greateſt duty, but our greateſt intereſt and advantage, which is that that Solomon chiefly refers to in the text. It is certain that no man can take a more effectual way to render his being in the world happy and comfortable to him (according to the ordinary courſe and event of things) in what condition or circumſtances ſoever he is placed, than to do all the good he can in his life; ſo that tho' a man that lays out himſelf in this way, ſeems only to reſpect the good of other people, yet in true reckoning he moſt conſults his own profit.

For to *do good*, is the natural way to raiſe us friends, who ſhall be obliged to contribute their endeavours to the furthering our honeſt deſigns; to the upholding and ſecuring us in our proſperity, and to the ſuccouring and relieving us when we are in any evil circumſtances. Such is the contrivance and the conſtitution of this world, that no man can ſubſiſt of himſelf, but ſtands in continual need of others, both for their comfortable ſociety, and their neceſſary aſſiſtance in his affairs. Now of all men living, the good man, who, maketh it his buſineſs to oblige all about him, is moſt likely to be the beſt befriended.

To *do good*, is the trueſt way to procure to a man's ſelf a good name and reputation in the world; which as it is a thing deſirable upon many accounts, ſo it is a ſingular advantage to a man for the carrying on his ſecular deſigns. Nay, to *do good*, is to embalm a man's

[c] John xiii. 34, 35. [d] John iii. 16.

man's name, and to transmit it with a grateful odour to posterity. *The memory of a good man shall be blessed*[d]. And the sense of mankind has always been, that too much honour could not be given to the name of those that have done good in their generation.

But, which is a great deal more than all this, to *do good* is the most certain effectual means to procure the blessing of God upon our endeavours, and to entitle ourselves to his more especial care, and providence, and protection: So that, let what will come, in all circumstances and conditions, the good man has the greatest assurance, that all things shall at least be tolerably well with him, and that he shall never be miserable. *Trust in the Lord* (saith David[e]) *and be doing good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.*

Nay, farther, to *do good*, is to entail a blessing upon our children after us. *I have been young, and now am old* (saith the same Psalmist[f]) *yet saw I never the righteous*, (that is the merciful and good man, for that is the notion of the word in that place, and in most others) such an one saw I never *forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread.*

Lastly, To conclude this point, to *do good* (besides all these advantages that attend it) is most to consult our own peace, and to make the best provision possible for our pleasure and delight. Charity (as Dr. Hammond used to say) is really a piece of sensuality. And Epicurus himself, the great master of voluptuousness, would confess, that it was not only more brave, but more pleasant, to do kindnesses, than to receive them. And certainly every good Man will find it so; for as the

[d] Prov. x. 7. [e] Ps. xxxvii. ver. 3. [f] Ib. ver. 25.

the exercise of charity and beneficence is as truly a gratification of our natural inclinations and appetites, as any other action or thing that causeth pleasure to us; so it is also a gratification of those appetites, which are the highest and the noblest we have. Now, by how much the appetite that is gratify'd is more noble and divine, by so much must the delight that ariseth from that gratification, be more exquisite. So that it was no very great hyperbole of our divine poet, when he said, that

——All joys go less,
Than that one joy of doing kindnesses.

And, which is farther to be considered, it is not with this pleasure, as it is with most others that vanish with the enjoyment, nay, often leave bitterness and melancholy upon the mind, after they are gone off: For to *do good*, is a permanent pleasure, a pleasure that will last as long as our lives. The memory of our good actions will always be accompanied with delight and satisfaction; when all our other past enjoyments prove matters of anguish and torment to us upon our reflections on them, these will be a refreshment; and the nearer we approach to death, still the more comfort we shall find in them. Would we, therefore, treasure up to ourselves a stock of lasting peace and joy, to support us in all conditions of our life, and so make our passage easy at our death, let us do all the good we can.

I think I have said enough to convince any one of the truth of Solomon's proposition, that *there is nothing better for a man*, nothing that more concerns him, either in point of duty or happiness, *than to do good in his life*. Much more might be said, and what hath

been said, might have been said with more advantage, and greater evidence, if it had been fit to insist upon every particular: But I will pursue this argument no farther, but proceed to

The second general point I propos'd; which is, to set before you *the practicableness of this great duty, by shewing the several ways which every person, though in the meanest circumstances, is capable of doing good.*

A great many there are that are as strongly convinced as may be, that 'tis both their interest and duty to be doing good in their lives; but they complain that it is not in their power, they have not any means or opportunities for it, and they bemoan themselves sadly upon this account, as thinking their lives useless, because they have not those visible capacities of being serviceable to the world that others have.

To such as these let me say this, in the general: There is no condition in the world so mean and despicable, but yields us opportunities of doing good. There is neither old nor young, man nor woman, rich nor poor, high nor low, learned nor unlearned, but in their sphere, by a good husbandry of those talents that God has intrusted to their care and management, they may be very useful to others, and prove instruments of much good in their generations.

This truth St. Paul elegantly sets forth in 1 Cor. xii. where he compares the society of Christians to a natural body. There he shews, that as in the natural body there are many members, and all those members have not the same dignity and honour, nor the same use or office; and yet every member (even the meanest) hath its particular use, by which it doth real service to the body; nay, so useful it is, that the body

cannot be without it: So it is with the church of Chriſt, and with every body politic. There is a neceſſity both in the church and in the ſtate, that there ſhould be variety of functions and callings, and degrees and conditions. There muſt be ſome to govern, and ſome to be governed; there muſt be ſome more conſpicuous, ſome more obſcure; ſome whoſe gifts and endowments lie this way, and ſome whoſe talents lie in another way; and yet there is not one of theſe but in his degree and ſtation, either is or may be as uſeful as any that belong to the ſociety. *So that the eye cannot ſay to the hand* (as our apoſtle there expreſſeth it) *I have no need of thee.* Nor again, the head to the feet, *I have no need of you:* Nay, more, *thoſe members of the body* (as he continues) *that ſeem to be moſt feeble, are yet very neceſſary.*

To reduce the apoſtle's notion to its particulars, or to ſhew in how many reſpects every individual perſon that is a member of a ſociety is neceſſary to the publick, and either doth, or may ſerve the weal of it, and ſo do good in his life, is a taſk too great for me to undertake at this time; let it ſuffice at the preſent, to propoſe to you theſe general heads:

Firſt of all, None can want opportunities of doing good that is in a capacity of performing any acts of mercy or charity, ſtrictly ſo called, whether that charity be ſhewn to the bodies or ſouls of men. Now the inſtances and expreſſions of this way of doing good are infinite, as infinite as are the wants and neceſſities of mankind.

To the bodies of men we do good, whenever we contribute to the relieving and eaſing them of their outward preſſures, and wants, and neceſſities they lie under; ſuch as ſickneſs, pain, poverty, hunger, nakedneſs,

kedneſs, debts, impriſonment, or any other outward affliction that falls upon them; whether that eaſe and relief be effected by our purſe, or by our counſel and advice, or by our labour and pains.

And ſure ſome of theſe three things there is none ſo mean or inconſiderable in the world, but it is in his power to benefit his poor neighbour with.

To the ſouls of men we do good, whenever by our diſcourſes, or other endeavours, we make men better or wiſer; when we inſtruct the ignorant, when we ſatisfy the doubtful, when we reduce thoſe that are miſled by error, when we eſtabliſh the weak, when we reprove thoſe that do amiſs; in a word, all our attempts and endeavours, in what way ſoever, to reclaim from vice, and to bring them to wiſdom and ſobriety, is a charity to their ſouls; and whether our deſigns ſucceed or not, we ſhall be rewarded, as thoſe that have done good in the world.

Secondly, All the acts of beneficence and kindneſs; nay, even of civility and good-nature, are to be accounted among the inſtances of doing good. A man doth good, not only by acts of charity properly ſo called, but by every courteſy that he doth to another; he doth good, by ſhewing his reſpect and good-will to all about him, by reconciling differences among neighbours, and promoting peace, friendſhip and ſociety, as much as he can; by being generous, liberal, and hoſpitable, according to his ability; by forgiving injuries, and, if it be poſſible, making friends of thoſe that did them; by being eaſy of acceſs, and ſweet and obliging in his carriage; by complying with the infirmities of thoſe he converſeth with; and, in a word, by contributing any way to make the lives of others more eaſy and comfortable to them.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, A man also doth good, when he makes use of that acquaintance or friendship or interest that he hath with others, to stir them up to the doing of that good, which he, by the narrowness of his condition, or for want of opportunity, cannot do himself. This is a very considerable instance of doing good, how slight soever it may seem; the man that exercises himself in this way is doubly a benefactor; for he is not only an instrument of good to the person or persons for whom he begged the kindness or the charity; but he does also a real kindness to the man himself, whom he puts upon the benefaction; for God will not less reward his good will for being excited by another.

Fourthly, Another way to do good, is to be careful and diligent, and conscientious in the discharge of those public offices, which we are called upon to execute in the place where we live. How burthensome soever these be, and how much soever of our time they rob us of, yet God, by calling us to them, hath put a *prize into our hands* (as the wise man speaks) to do much good, *if we have hearts to make use thereof.*

Fifthly, We do good, when, being in a private capacity, we so carry ourselves in all the relations in which we stand as the nature of the relation requireth. As for instance, when, being subjects, we conscientiously obey the laws of the kingdom, and submit to our governors, and promote what we can the public peace both of church and state. When, being masters of families, we take care of those under our charge, making sufficient provision both for their souls and bodies. When, being husbands or wives, we discharge

faithfully all the conjugalduties: When, being parents, we love our children, and *bring them up in the fear and nurture of the Lord.* When, being children, *we obey our parents in all things.* When, being ſervants, *we do our work in ſingleneſs of heart, not as men-pleaſers, but as thoſe that account they have a maſter in heaven.* When, having contracted friendſhips, we are ſecret and faithful, and prudent in the maintaining and preſerving of them; and proportionably in all the other relations that we ſtand in. All theſe things, tho' they appear little, yet are they in their degree a real good and benefit to mankind, and ſo neceſſary, that there is no living tolerably without them.

Sixthly, We alſo do good by an honeſt and a diligent purſuit of our calling and employment. There is no art or trade that we are bred to, but if it be a lawful one, it may be of great uſe to the publick, and by well minding it, and fairly managing it, we may render ourſelves very profitable members of the commonwealth.

Seventhly and *laſtly,* We may do a great deal of good by our good examples, by being to others patterns of piety and prudence, of diligence and induſtry, of peaceableneſs and loyalty, of humility and meekneſs, and temperance. In a word, every man, that will make himſelf eminent in any virtue, will be a light to the world, his life will be a conſtant ſermon, and he will often prove as effectual a benefactor to thoſe about him by his example, as others are by their counſels and exhortations.

And now, all theſe things conſidered, who is there among us in ſuch deplorable circumſtances, that he can reaſonably pretend to want ability or opportunity to

to *do good in his Life?* Sure I am, he must live in a desart, and have no communication with mankind, that cannot some or other of these ways be useful and beneficial to them. And thus much of our second head of discourse.

I now come, in the third and last place, to make some application of what hath been spoken.

And *First*, Since every man is so highly concerned, as we have seen, to do good in his life, let us all be perswaded seriously and heartily to apply our minds hereunto. Let us look upon it, not as a by-work, a thing to be done now and then, as there is occasion, after our turns are served: But let us lay out ourselves upon it, let us propose it to ourselves as the great business of our lives. Let us take all opportunities for it, let us contrive and manage all our affairs so, that they may some way or other be subservient to the carrying on this great work.

Let this be the end of our gathering riches, and the measure of our expending them. To heap up riches, that we may be rich, or to throw them away upon our lusts, are both equally intolerable; it is the doing good with them, that sanctifies both the getting and the spending them.

Let this be the compass to steer and direct us in our pursuit after knowledge, in our learning arts and sciences, in the managery of our trades and employments; in a word, in the choice and in the prosecution of every design that is proposed to us. In all these things, the great enquiry is to be, What good will they tend to? How shall we be rendered more useful to the

world, if our designs and endeavours, as to these matters, do take effect?

Let this be the great rule by which we proceed in the education of our children and relations, and the provisions we make for them in the world. Let it be our first care to possess them with a deep sense of the duty they owe to the publick, and to furnish them with such qualities as will render them profitable members of it, and to put them into such professions and employments, as may afford them fair scope for the exercise of those qualities. If we thus provide for them, though we otherwise leave them never so small an estate, yet with the blessing of God, they have a good portion.

Lastly, Let this design of doing good, influence our very offices of religion. When we make our applications to the throne of grace, let us be sure to have the publick always in mind; and even when we pray for ourselves, let it be with this design and resolution, that as God in mercy bestows upon us the blessings and the grace we pray for, we will employ them for the good of others.

O that we would thus seriously concern ourselves in doing good! O that we would once lay aside all our little selfish designs, and that narrowness and penuriousness of spirit, with which most of us are bound up; and with ardent love and charity, set ourselves *not to seek his own, but every man another's good*, as the apostle [a] exhorteth.

Secondly, If the doing good be so necessary a duty, as hath been represented, what must we say of those men that frame to themselves models of christianiry, without

[a] 1 Cor. x. 4.

without putting this duty into its notion? There is a sort of Christianity, which hath obtained in the world, that is made up of faith and knowledge of the Gospel mysteries, without any respect to charity and good-works. Nay, have we not heard of a sort of Christianity, the very perfection of which seems to consist in the disparaging this duty of *doing good*, as much as is possible; crying it down as a heathen virtue, a poor blind piece of morality, a thing that will no way further our salvation; nay, so far from that, that it often proves a hindrance to it, by taking us off from that full reliance and recumbency that we ought to have on the righteousness of Jesus Christ only, in order to our salvation?

But, O how contrary are these doctrines, to the doctrine of Christ and his apostles! How widely different a thing do they make Christianity to be from what it will appear, if we take our notions of it from their sermons and practices? Is it possible, that he that went about doing good himself, made it his meat and drink, the business and employment of his life, should set so light by it in us that are his followers?

Is it possible that they that so often call upon us [a] *to do good, to be rich in good works,* [b] *above all things to have fervent charity among ourselves*, telling us, that [c] *all faith is nothing, all knowledge of mysteries* is nothing, all gifts of prophecy and miracles are nothing; but that charity is all in all. I say, is it possible that they should think doing good so insignificant, so unprofitable, nay, so dangerous a thing as these I spoke of do represent it?

But I need not farther reprove their opinions, because I hope they find but few patrons; but this se-

[a] 1 Tim. vi. 18. [b] 1 Pet. iv. 8. [c] 1 Cor. xiii. 2—13.

riouſly ought to be reproved among us, *viz.* that we do not generally lay that ſtreſs upon this duty we are ſpeaking of, that we ought to do.

Many are ready enough, to acknowledge their obligations to do good, and count it a very commendable thing, and a work that God will bleſs them the better for; yet they are loth to make it an eſſential ingredient of their religion; they think they may be religious and ſerve God without it. If they be but ſober in their lives, and juſt in their dealings, and come to church at the uſual times, they have religion enough to carry them to heaven; though in the mean time, they continue covetous, and hard, and uncharitable, without bowels of pity and compaſſion, and make no uſe of their wealth, or their power and intereſt, or their parts and induſtry, or their other talents committed to them for the doing good in the world.

Far be it from any man to pretend to determine what virtues or degrees of them are preciſely neceſſary to ſalvation, and what virtues or degrees of them a man may ſafely be without: But this is certain, that charity and doing good are none of thoſe that can be ſpared. The Scripture hath every where declared theſe qualities to be as neceſſary in order to our ſalvation, as any condition of the Goſpel. Nay, if we will conſult St. Matthew xxv. where the proceſs of the general judgment is deſcribed, we ſhall find theſe to be the great points that at the laſt day men will be examin'd upon, and upon which the whole caſe of their eternal ſtate will turn. So that if we take the Scripture for our guide, theſe men at laſt will be found to be much miſtaken, and to have made a very falſe judgment both of religion and of their own condition.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, From what hath been said about doing good, we may gather wherein that perfection of Christianity which we are to aspire after, doth consist. It has been much disputed, which is the most perfect life, to live in the world as other men do, and to serve God in following our employments, and taking care of our families, and doing good offices to our neighbours, and discharging all other duties that our relation to the publick requires of us; or to retire from the world, and to quit all secular concernments, and wholly to give up ourselves to prayer and meditation, and those other exercises of religion, properly so called.

This latter kind of life is so magnified by the Romanists, in comparison of the other, that it hath engrossed to itself, the name of religious. None, among them, are thought worthy to be stiled religious persons, but those that cloyster up themselves in a monastery. But whatever excellence may be pretended in this course of life, it certainly falls much short of that, which is led in a publick way. He serves God best, that is most serviceable to his generation. And no prayers, or fasts, or mortifications, are near so acceptable a sacrifice to our heavenly Father, as to *do good in our lives*.

It is true, to keep within doors, and to attend our devotions (though those that are in appearance most abstracted from the world, are not always the most devout persons) I say, this kind of life is the most easy and the safer. A man is not then exposed so much to temptations; he may with less difficulty preserve his innocence; but where is the praise of such a virtue? Virtue is then most glorious, and shall be

moſt rewarded, when it meets with moſt trials and oppoſitions.

And as for the bravery of contemning the world and all the pomps of it, which they ſo magnify in this kind of life; alas, it is rather an effect of puſilanimity and love of our eaſe, and a deſire to be free from cares and burthens, than of any true nobleneſs of mind. If we would live to excellent purpoſe indeed, if we would ſhew true bravery of ſpirit, and true piety towards God, let us live as our bleſſed Lord and his apoſtles did. Let us not fly temptations, but overcome them; let us not ſit at home, amuſing ourſelves with our pleaſing contemplations, when we may be uſeful and beneficial abroad. Let us ſo order our devotions towards God, that they may be a means of promoting our worldly buſineſs and affairs, and doing good among men. Let us take our fit times of retirement and abſtraction, that we may the more freely converſe with God, and pour out our ſouls before him; but let this be only to the end that we may appear abroad again more briſk and lively, in vanquiſhing the temptations that come in our way, and more prompt and readily diſpoſed to every good work: This is to imitate our Lord Jeſus, to walk as we have him for an example. This is a life more ſuitable to the contrivance and the genius of his religion, which is more accommodated to cities and publick ſocieties, than to cloyſters and deſarts. And laſtly, this is to walk in a conformity to his command, who hath bid us [a] *make our light ſo to ſhine before men, that they may ſee our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven.*

But *Fourthly* and *laſtly*, if it be a thing ſo neceſſary, that every man ſhould do good in his life, as hath been

[a] Mat. v. 16.

been repreſented, then how much to be reproved are they, that do no good till their death? That live ſcrapingly and uncharitably, and uſeleſly to the world, all their lives long, and then when they come to die, think to attone for their ſins and neglects of this kind by ſhewing ſome extraordinary bounty to the poor, or devoting ſome part of their eſtates to public or pious uſes?

I muſt confeſs, this kind of proceeding doth, to me, ſeem juſt like the buſineſs of putting off a man's repentance to his death-bed. It is abſolutely neceſſary, that a man ſhould repent, though it be never ſo late; and ſo it is, that he ſhould do good: If he have done little good in his life, he is bound, as he loves his ſoul, to ſhew ſome extraordinary uncommon inſtances of charity, and a publick ſpirit, when he comes to die. But then, it is here, as it is with the long delaying of repentance, the deferring it ſo long has robbed the man of the greateſt part of the praiſe, and the comfort he might have expected from it. His rewards in heaven will be much leſs, though his good deeds ſhould be accepted, but he is infinitely uncertain, whether they will or no. It muſt be a very great act of generoſity and charity, that can obtain a pardon for a whole life of uncharitableneſs.

Let us all, therefore, labour and ſtudy *to do good in our lives*, let us be daily giving evidences to the world, of our kind and charitable diſpoſition, and let not that be the firſt which is diſcovered in our laſt will and teſtament. If God hath bleſſed us with worldly goods, let us diſtribute them as we ſee occaſion in our lifetime, when every one may ſee we do it voluntarily; and not ſtay till we muſt be forced to part with them, whether we will or no; for that will blaſt the credit of our good deeds, both with God and man.

I have said enough concerning the first point, recommended in the text, *viz. doing good.* I now come briefly to treat of the other, that is, *rejoicing*, which is equally a part of the business of this day.

There is no good (saith *Solomon*) *in any earthly thing*; or, *there is nothing better for any man than to rejoice and to do good.*

The *rejoicing* here recommended, is capable of two senses; the first more general, and more concerning us as Christians; the other more particular, and which more immediately concerns us, as we are here met upon this occasion.

In the first place, by *rejoicing*, we may take to be meant, a constant habit of joy and chearfulness; so that we are always contented and well-pleased, always free from those anxieties and disquiets, and uncomfortable reflections, that make the lives of mankind miserable. This now is the perfection of *rejoicing*, and it is the utmost degree of happiness that we are here capable of. It must be granted, indeed, that not many do arrive to this state; but yet, I doubt not but that it is a state that may be attained, at least in a great measure, in this world. Otherwise the holy men in Scripture, and particularly the apostles of our Lord, would never have recommended it to us, so often as they have done. *Rejoice evermore*, saith St. Paul to the Thessalonians [a]. And to the Philippians, [b] *Rejoice in the Lord always*; *and again, I say, rejoice.*

The way to attain to this happy condition doth consist chiefly in these three things: First a great innocence and virtue, a behaving ourselves so in the world, that our consciences shall not reproach us. This St. *Paul* lays as the foundation of *rejoicing.*

This

[a] 1 Thess. v. 16. [b] Phil. iv. 4.

This (saith he [a]) *is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, I have had my conversation in this world.* It is in vain to think of any true, solid joy, or peace, or contentment, without a hearty practice of all the duties of our religion, so that we can satisfy ourselves of our own sincerity before God.

And then, Secondly, To make us capable of this constant rejoicing, besides the innocence of our lives, there must go a firm and hearty persuasion of God's particular providence; a belief, that he not only dispenseth all events that come to pass in the world, even the most inconsiderable; but that the measure of the dispensations of his providence is infinite wisdom and goodness, and nothing else; so that nothing doth or ever can happen to us in particular, or to the world in general, but what is for the best. Now when we firmly believe this, and frequently attend to it, how can we be either sollicitous for the future, or discontented at the present events of things, let them fall out never so cross to our desires and expectations? This is the best antidote in the world (and an effectual one it is) against all trouble and vexation and uneasiness, that can happen to us upon any occasion whatsoever; to wit, the consideration that all things are managed by an infinitely wise and good God, and will at last prove for the best, how unaccountable soever they appear to us at present. And this is that which the wise man insinuates in the verse before the text, when he saith, that *God hath made every thing beautiful in his season.*

Thirdly, Another requisite, both for the procuring and preserving this continual chearfulness and rejoicing,

[a] Cor. i. 12.

cing, is a frequent and fixed attention to the great rewards of the other world, which God hath promised to all that truly love him, and endeavour to please him. This consideration will extremely add to our comfort, and contribute to our rejoicing under all the miseries and afflictions that we can possibly fall into, namely, that whatsoever condition we are in here, we shall certainly, in a little time, be in a most happy and glorious one; and the worse our circumstances are in this life, the greater (if we be good) shall be our happiness in the next; for *these light afflictions* (as St. Paul tells us [a]) *which endure but for a moment, do work for us a far more exceeding weight of glory.*

This, then, is the joy that we are to endeavour after in the first place, to be constantly well pleased and contented with our present condition whatever it be; and these are the ways to attain it.

But, Secondly, There is another more particular notion of *rejoicing*, and which, I conceive, Solomon doth chiefly intend in the words of the text; and that is, the free and comfortable enjoyment of the good things of this life that God hath blessed us with, in opposition to a pinching and penurious way of living. This, I say, seems to be the notion of *rejoicing* that the text speaks of, as appears by the following verse. Solomon having told us in the text, that there is nothing better for a man than to *rejoice* and *do good*; he adds, by way of explication of what he meant by *rejoicing*, these words, *that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labours, for it is the gift of God.* And frequently in this book of Ecclesiastes doth he persuade to this kind of rejoicing. Thus in

[a] 2 Cor. iv. 17.

in chap. ii. ver. 24. *There is nothing better for a man, than that he ſhould eat and drink, and that he ſhould make his ſoul enjoy good in his labour; this alſo I ſaw, it was from the hand of God.* And in chap. v. ver. 18. *Behold that which I have ſeen, it is good and comely for one to eat and drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labours that he taketh under the ſun of all the days of his life, which God giveth him, for it is his portion.* And in chap. vi. ver. 1, 2. he repreſents it as a *great evil that he hath ſeen under the ſun, and yet ſuch an evil as is common among men, that a man to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and honour, ſo that he wanteth nothing for his ſoul, of all that he deſireth, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a ſtranger eateth it; this* (ſaith he) *is vanity and an evil diſeaſe.*

And there is certainly great reaſon in what he ſaith, for to have a plentiful portion of the good things of this life, and not to have the heart to make uſe of them for the enjoyment of ourſelves and friends; for the refreſhing us under the toil that this life doth expoſe us to; for the promoting acquaintance and ſociety, and the rendring our condition as eaſy as may be; is as unaccountable a folly as we can be guilty of, and makes us really as poor and neceſſitous as thoſe that want bread, but only not ſo pityable.

Taking now this to be the ſenſe of *rejoicing* in the text (as I believe it is) we have from hence a good warrant for this day's meeting; for we come together to *rejoice* in Solomon's ſenſe, that is, *to eat and drink, and to enjoy the good of our labours*, it being *the gift of God ſo to do.*

And

And this practice of ours is not only reasonable in itself, but is commended to us by the example of God's people, both under the law and the gospel. The Jews, by the appointment of God himself, were to meet every year three times at Jerusalem, the capital city of the nation, *to feast and to rejoice before the Lord*, as we have it in the express words of Moses[a]. And the Christians, for near two hundred years after our Saviour, had their Agapæ, their feasts of charity, wherein they met together, both poor and rich, to enjoy and make merry, one with another. It is true, these feasts were at length left off by common consent, because there grew abuses in them; they became occasions of luxury and excess; and so matters of scandal to our religion. But this was not an ill reflection upon the thing itself, which was innocent and commendable, but upon the abuse of the thing: A good and laudable institution was perverted to evil purposes. However, this very consideration ought to make us very careful of our carriage and behaviour in these our meetings, lest we fall under the same inconveniencies: Which that we may prevent, two things are especially needful, to be taken care of by us,

First, That we do not exceed the bounds of *rejoicing*, prescribed to Christians; that is, That we avoid all excess, and use the creatures of God soberly and temperately, so as to give offence to none, nor to *make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.*

And, Secondly, That we take care to perform and make good the ends and designs of these feasts of rejoicings; which ends, if we will take our measures from those laws that God gave to his own people in the

[a] See *Deut.* xvi.

the Old-teſtament, and which the modern Jews themſelves, in their commentaries take notice of; and which are ſo reaſonable in themſelves, that without any authority, they do recommend themſelves to us, are theſe four following:

Firſt, That we rejoice before the Lord, that is, that we make our humble acknowledgments, and return our due praiſes and thanks to him, for all the good thinks he hath bleſſed us with in our lives; confeſſing that all we have is from his free bounty and goodneſs, and that our meeting together is to praiſe his name upon that account. And this was the thing that was meant by thoſe ſolemn ſacrifices, that the Jews were bound to offer at Jeruſalem, at their annual feaſts.

The ſecond end of theſe feaſts, is to take occaſion from hence to learn our duty, to be inſtructed in all the branches of that obedience we owe unto God. For as Maimonides obſerves, that was one of the principal reaſons of God's calling together all the people of the Jews to appear at the feaſt of Tabernacles, to wit, that they might hear the law read unto them; and this deſign is, I ſuppoſe, purſued by us in our chuſing this place to aſſemble in.

A third end of theſe feaſts (as the ſame Maimonides tells us) and is manifeſt from Scripture, is to promote acquaintance and friendſhip, and brotherly love, one with another. And this is a very noble end, and ſerves many excellent purpoſes, and nothing can be beyond it, except,

The fourth and laſt end of theſe meetings, which is to do good; to exerciſe our charity towards our poor indigent brethren. No man, at the ſolemn feaſt of the Jews, *was to appear before the Lord empty*: He

was to bring his offering, not only to God, by way of recognition and acknowledgement to him; but for the poor alſo, that they might rejoice as well as he. This is well obſerved by Maimonides, from Deut. xvi. 14. where it is thus ſaid, *Thou ſhalt rejoice in thy feaſt, thou and thy ſon, and thy daughter, thy man-ſervant, and thy maid-ſervant, the levite and the ſtranger, the fatherleſs and the widow, that are within thy gates.*

This then is the great end of our aſſembly, that not only we, but the fatherleſs, and the widow, all of our country, that need our charity, may rejoice with us, and for us. And this is that which Solomon joins with rejoicing in the text, *There is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice and to do good*: And what that man, who by the ſentence of God, was declared the wiſeſt of all men, hath thus joined together, let none of us preſume to put aſunder. Theſe are the rules, and theſe are the ends that we are to obſerve in this our feaſt; and let us all, for the honour of Chriſt's religion, and for the credit of our particular country, charge the obſervation of them upon ourſelves: Which if we can all reſolve to do, I can ſafely apply to every one of you that ſaying of Solomon, in the ninth chapter of this book of Eccleſiaſtes and the ſeventh verſe, with which I ſhall conclude; *Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy work.*

SER-

SERMON IV.

The Rich Man's Duty, and the Encouragement he hath to practise it.

1 TIM. vi. 17, 18, 19.

Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.

That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate.

Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

GROTIUS his note upon this text, is th s, That St. Paul now having finished this his epistle to Timothy, it comes into his mind, that there was need of some more particular application to be made, and admonition to be given to those wealthy merchants, with which the city of Ephesus (where Timothy

Timothy reſided) did then abound; and upon this conſideration, he inſerts thoſe words I have now read, *Charge them that are rich in this world*, &c.

How famous ſoever the city of Epheſus was at that time for wealth or trade, there is little doubt to be made, that this city of ours (praiſed be God for it) doth in thoſe reſpects, at this day, equal, if not much exceed it. And therefore that which St. Paul thought of ſo great importance, as to give eſpecial orders to Timothy, to preſs upon the Epheſian citizens, will always be very fit to be ſeriouſly recommended to you in this place; and more eſpecially at this time, ſince it is the proper work of the day. Waving therefore wholly the argument of our Saviour's reſurrection, upon which you have before been entertained; I apply myſelf, without farther preface, to conclude this Eaſter ſolemnity with that with which St. Paul concludes his epiſtle, viz. with a ſhort diſcourſe of the rich man's great duty and concernment, which is in theſe words plainly ſet forth to us.

In them we may take notice of theſe three generals, which I ſhall make the heads of my following diſcourſe:

Firſt, The duty itſelf incumbent upon thoſe that are rich in this world, expreſſed in ſeveral particulars.

Secondly, The great obligation that lies upon them to the performance of it, which we may gather from the vehemence and the authority with which St. Paul orders Timothy to preſs it; *Charge them* (ſaith he) *that are rich, that they be not*, &c.

Thirdly, The mighty encouragement they have to obſerve this charge; for hereby *they lay up to themſelves in ſtore a good foundation againſt the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.* Firſt,

First, I begin with the rich man's dury, which is here expres'd in four points; two of them negative, teaching what things he ought to avoid; the other two positive, teaching what he ought to practise. They are these:

I. That he should not be high-minded.

II. That he should not trust in uncertain riches.

III. That he should trust in the living God.

IV. That he should do good, be rich in good works, &c.

The first thing that is given in charge to all those that are rich in this world, is, that *they be not high-minded*, μὴ ὑψηλοφρονεῖν, that they do not think too well of themselves for being rich, and take occasion from thence to despise others that are in meaner circumstances than they. They are not to value themselves a jot the more, or to think worse of others upon account of that outward fortune they are possess'd of; but are in all their conversation to express the same moderation, and humanity, and easiness, and obligingness of temper to those they have to do with, even the meanest and the poorest, as if they stood with them upon the same level.

And with very great reason hath St. Paul given this caution to rich men. For by the experience of the world, it hath been always found, that wealth is apt to puff up, to make men look big, and to breed in them a contempt of others; but what little ground there is for this, is easily seen by any that will give themselves leave to consider.

For what doth any of these worldly goods (which make us keep at distance) really add to a man in point of true worth and value? Do they either recommend him

him more to God or to wise men, or even to himself, if he have a grain of sense in him, than if he was without them? Certainly they do not. For that for which either God approves us, or wise men esteem us, or we can speak peace and content to ourselves, is not any thing without us, any thing that fortune hath given to us; but something that we may more truly call our own; something that we were neither born with, nor could any body hinder us of, nor can be taken from us; that is to say, the riches of our minds, our virtuous and commendable qualities.

A man is no more a fit object of esteem, merely for being rich, than the beast he rides on (if I may use the old comparison) is of commendation for the costly trappings he wears.

Secondly, Another caution given to those that are rich in this world, is, *that they should not trust in uncertain riches*. This likewise is a temptation to which they are exposed; and our Saviour hath very lively set it forth to us in the parable of the rich man in the gospel, who having got mighty possessions, and filled his barns, thought of nothing farther; but presently saith to himself, [a] *Soul, take thy ease, eat, drink, and be merry, for thou hast goods laid up for many years*: But the conclusion of that parable doth sufficiently shew the vanity and ridiculousness of this trusting in our riches; for a message comes to him from God, *Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee, and then whose shall all these things be that thou hast provided?* It is the greatest madness in the world to please, or speak peace to ourselves upon account of that which we are not sure to enjoy a day, but we may, for any thing

[a] Luke xii. 16, *&c.*

thing we know, be ſnatch'd away the next moment into another world, and ſo muſt leave the joy and pride of our hearts to we know not whom.

But ſuppoſing we had ſome certainty of our lives, and could promiſe ourſelves, that we ſhould not leave our wealth for ſome competent time, yet we have no certainty that our wealth will not leave us. How proſperous ſoever our preſent circumſtances be, yet we cannot enſure the continuance of them; there are a thouſand accidents may happen every day, which may ſtrip us as naked as when we came into the world, and we may be reduced to the extremities of thoſe who are now the greateſt objects of our compaſſion and charity; and this is that which St. Paul in the text inſinuates, when he calls them uncertain riches. But what are we then to truſt to, if not in theſe things? This St. Paul ſhews in the words following, which make

The third inſtance of the rich man's duty, *Let them* (ſaith he) *truſt in the living God, who giveth to all men richly to enjoy.* The ſenſe of it is this; let them, from the bottom of their hearts, acknowledge God to be the author and giver of all that they poſſeſs: How much ſoever their heads projected, or their hands laboured, or their parents and friends were kind to them, yet it is the providence of the Almighty to which they owe all. The ſame divine foreſight and contrivance that feeds the fowls of the air, and cloaths the flowers of the field, doth alſo *give them richly all things to enjoy*; and therefore upon that providence are they entirely to depend, as much exerciſing faith in God, and repoſing confidence in him, as if they had no viſible proviſions made for them: And as heartily returning thanks to their great benefactor for every bleſſing they

have, (seem it never so much their own already) as a hungry man, that knows not where to get a meal, would to him that should give him a plentiful entertainment. In a word, those that have all things in this world, must as devoutly look up to God, both in gratefully ascribing to him every enjoyment either past or present, and in a full trust and reliance upon him, for what is to come, as those that live from hand to mouth; since it is the same divine providence that feeds and maintains both the poor and the rich, and of his infinite goodness, gives to all that fear him, even to the poor, as well as the rich, all things to enjoy; and though to the one more plentifully, yet to the other perhaps with as much content, though not in so great abundance.

The fourth and last part of the rich man's duty here mentioned, concerns the right use of that wealth that God hath given him. Now the right use of riches, according to the text, doth consist in these things; that those that have them do good with them, *that they be rich in good works*, that they be *ready to distribute, willing to communicate.*

If we suppose every one of these distinct phrases in the text, to denote a distinct thing, then we are to give this account of the passage, that St. Paul here useth a gradation in his speech, begins with the lowest and most general expressions of charity, and so goes on to higher degrees of it; in each following phrase intending to say something more great or particular than what he had said in the former, which is a most usual and elegant scheme of rhetorick. According to this account, (as the words are very capable of it) there are four things here prescribed to the rich man, in the use of his riches.

1. That

1. That he do good with them, that is the most general point; that is, that he employ them some way or other for the benefit of others. He must not live to himself alone, he must design greater things than the getting an estate, or the raising a family; if others be not advantaged by him, he is rich to no purpose. And therefore it will concern him to do kindnesses and good offices where he can, to be liberal and hospitable, to oblige his friends and relations all ways possible, to assist all about him with his counsel, to encourage them by his example; in a word, to make use of that interest and reputation that his fortune hath given him above others to do kindnesses to them.

2. He must not think it sufficient to do this good now and then, upon particular and more rare occasions; but he must abound in acts of goodness: That is the meaning of the apostle's second expression of being rich in good works. He must so study and improve in the art of doing good, that his good deeds do equal his riches; nay, the words import that his true riches are only placed in, and to be measured by his good deeds. He is not to think himself farther rich, than he is rich in good works. The more plentifully God hath blessed him with worldly wealth, the more diligent and industrious, and solicitous he must be to do good with it; otherwise he is poorer than those that perhaps he now and then out of charity relieves.

And, 3. Lest this doing good, and being rich in good works, should only be interpreted of doing such kindnesses and good deeds that cost us nothing but the expence of our time, or the employment of our pains, or the use of our interest with others; the apostle adds this farther thing; that the rich man must be *ready to distribute*;

distribute; that is, very free to part with his money according to the proportion God hath blessed him with, upon every occasion of real and useful charity: 1. Whether that charity be of a more public nature; as for instance, when it is expressed for the advancing religion and the service of God, or for the making standing provision for the poor; or finally, any way for the serving the necessities, or increasing the conveniencies of the place where we live, by any public useful benefaction: Or, 2. Whether this charity be of a more private nature, extending no farther than to particular persons that come in our way, whom we are convinced to be real objects of it; to these likewise we must be ready to distribute; every poor necessitous person hath a right to part of what we have, if we can really satisfy ourselves, that our alms will do him a real good, and will not be any great prejudice to us. But,

4. And lastly, The apostle adds another thing to all this; and that is, that the rich man must be willing to communicate. If the sense of this phrase be different from the former, it will seem to import yet a higher degree of liberality. It will import, that rich men should be of such public spirits, and so little esteem their wealth their own, that it should in a manner be made a common thing, wherein all should share as there was occasion. This is the Notion of κοινωνια, or communicating, as it was used in the beginning of Christianity. St. Luke in Acts ii. having told us, that the first Christians continued in the apostle's doctrine, and in communicating, presently explains what he meant by that communion. *All* (saith he, ver. 44.) *that believed were together, and had all things common, and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.* God

God be thanked, the church of Christ is not now in such circumstances, that it is either needful or reasonable, precisely to observe the practice of those times as to this matter. We are not only not obliged to part with the propriety of our estate, and to live in common, as the first persecuted christians did, but we should be highly indiscreet, not to say injurious, both to ourselves and the public, if we did. But this, notwithstanding their practice, and the charge here laid upon us, to be communicative, will thus far oblige us, viz. that we christians should always retain that public generous spirit that they in the first times were acted with. We should sit so loose from the world, and so unconcerned in the distinction of *meum* and *tuum*, that we should make it our business to do good with what we have, thinking our wealth best employed, when it is put to that use. And when the cause of God, and the common interest of our christian brethren, do require it, we should then as freely part with all we have, as our predecessors in christianity did; following herein the precept of our Lord, to the young man, who came to enquire of him, what he should do, that he might inherit eternal life; and who was thus answered by our Saviour, That though he had kept the commandments, yet he wanted one thing to make him perfect (that is, to make him a true christian) and that was, *To sell all that he had, and give to the poor, and come and follow him; and then he should have treasure in heaven*, Matt. xix. 21.

Thus have I given you a brief account of each particular of the rich man's duty, as it is summ'd up in the text; and some perhaps will think it is severe enough: whether it be so or no, I now dispute not, but I am

ſure it is ſeverely required of them. This we may gather from St. Paul's way of urging it: *Charge them* (ſaith he) *that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded*, &c. He doth not ſay, recommend this to them, as a thing that is very reaſonable in itſelf, and will highly become them; he doth not ſay, put them in mind of it, as a thing by which they may gain a great deal of honour and reputation to their religion; he doth not ſay, exhort and perſuade them to it, as a thing that will at laſt conduce to their own advantage: But he ſaith, charge it upon them, intimating, that there was a neceſſity they ſhould thus practiſe; it was a duty indiſpenſably incumbent upon all of them; and this is the ſecond general point I am to inſiſt on.

And certainly this order of St. Paul to Timothy is a ſtanding warrant, a perpetual commiſſion to all miniſters of the goſpel, to charge the ſame thing upon all rich men in all places and times. But in the preſſing and enforcing this charge, I ſhall not ſo much have regard to the three former duties, as to the laſt, which concerns the doing good with our wealth, the exerciſing acts of bounty and charity as we have an opportunity. *Charge them that are rich in this world, that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to diſtribute, willing to communicate.*

Now in four reſpects eſpecially, rich men are thus to be charged, and a neceſſity lies upon them to practiſe accordingly, viz.

In point of { *Gratitude*, *Juſtice*, *Religion*, *Self-preſervation.*

If all theſe put together do not make the obligation indiſpenſable, I know not what will. I will ſpeak of each particular. Firſt,

First, If rich men do not thus employ their wealth, they are guilty of great ingratitude. That is the least evil imputation they fall under, and yet to any ingenious man it is heavy enough; for to call a man unthankful, is as great a reproach as you can cast upon him.

Whoever acknowledgeth the being of God, and owns his providence in the world, must necessarily believe, that all that portion of good things which he enjoys in this life, doth proceed from that God, as the author and fountain, though they be immediately conveyed to him by the ministry of second causes; and his reason and humanity will suggest to him, that there are some returns of gratitude to be made to him, that of his free bounty hath thus obliged him; but what returns can he make to God for his blessings, other than in communicating those blessings among his fellow-creatures? To think that a verbal acknowledgement of God's favours is a suitable return, is against the common sense of mankind, who know that there goes more to a man's being truly grateful, than the entertaining the person that obliged him with fair speeches and professions of his obligations: and on the other side, to think of requiting God in a proper sense, by returning real kindnesses to him for those he hath done to us, is equally absurd; for all the services we can pay to him, cannot add any thing to his infinite blessedness. How then must we express our thankfulness for the wealth that he hath bestowed upon us? why he himself hath prescribed the way to us. He hath devolved his right to our kindness upon our brethren: He hath deputed them to receive the real testimonies of our gratitude to him, and whatsoever obli-

gations we put upon them, he takes them as an expreſſion of our love and thankfulneſs to him.

This our Saviour himſelf hath told us in expreſs words, in St. Matt. 25. *Inaſmuch* (ſaith he) *as ye have done it*, i. e. done acts of kindneſs and charity; *to one of the leaſt of theſe my brethren, ye have done it unto me.* And the charitable contributions of the Hebrew chriſtians to their indigent brethren, is by St. Paul ſtiled a *work and labour of love ſhewed to God* himſelf, Heb. 6. If therefore rich men would not be unkind and ingrateful to him that gave them all they have, there is a neceſſity they ſhould do good, &c.

Secondly, The practice of this muſt likewiſe be charged upon them in point of juſtice, as well as gratitude; for it is a piece of diſhoneſty not to do good with the wealth that God hath given us; for it is falſifying our truſt, it is embezelling our maſter's goods, and putting them to quite other uſes than thoſe he gave us them for. We are not to think that God ever made a man rich for his own ſake alone, for the ſerving his own turnings, and the ſatisfaction of his own private deſires, without reſpect to the community. No, at the beſt, we are but the ſtewards of God's bleſſings. A ſtock of talents he hath committed to all of us, to ſome in greater, and to others in ſmaller proportions, and out of this ſtock he hath given us leave to make a proviſion for the neceſſities and conveniencies of ourſelves and our families; but we muſt not think all our own that accrues to us, ſo that it is at our liberty, whether we will hoard it up, or ſpend it profuſely. No, we muſt have regard to the reſt of our maſter's ſervants. After we have ſerved our own

needs, we must dispense the surplusage among the family of God, otherwise we are false and wicked stewards, we abuse and misemploy our master's talents, and a severe account we shall one day render for so doing.

Thirdly, Mens religion and christianity are also deeply concerned in this point. Works of charity are so essential to all religion, and more especially to that which we call christian, that without them it is but an empty name in whosoever professes it. Let men pretend what they will, let them be never so orthodox in their belief, or regular in their conversation, or strict in the performance of those duties that relate to the worship of God, yet if they be hard-hearted and uncharitable, if God hath given them wealth, and they have not hearts to do good with it, they have no true piety towards God. They may have a name to live, but they are really dead. An unmerciful christian, or a religious covetous man, are terms that imply a contradiction. For the satisfying you of this, I shall but need to put these following questions:

Can that man be accounted religious, that neither loves God nor his neighbour? Sure he cannot; for these two things are the whole of religion, as the holy scripture often assures us; but now the covetous man neither doth the one, nor the other. His neighbours he doth not love, that is certain; for if he did, they would find some fruits of it; unless this be to be accounted love, to give them good words, *to say to a brother or a sister that is naked and destitute of daily food, depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; when, notwithstanding they give them not those things that be needful for the body* †. But this kind of love St. James

† James ii. 14, &c.

hath long ago declared not to be worth any thing. And as for the love of God, another apoſtle hath put it out of doubt, that the uncharitable man hath no ſuch thing in him. *Whoſo* (ſaith St. *John*) *hath this world's good, and ſeeth his brother have need, and ſhutteth up his bowels of compaſſion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him!* [a] *For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath ſeen, how can he love God whom he hath not ſeen* [b]?

Can he be thought a religious man, or a true chriſtian, that wants the two main qualifications that go to the making up a diſciple of Chriſt, that is to ſay, faith and repentance? Yet this doth he that is *rich in this world, but is not rich in good works.* Good works are the very ſoul of faith, and it is no more alive without them, than the body is without the ſpirit, as St. James has expreſly told us [c]. If we mean that our faith ſhould avail us any thing, it muſt work (or be made perfect) by charity, ſaith St. Paul; [d] for though a man have *all faith, ſo that he could remove mountains*, i. e. tho' he be ſo heartily perſuaded of the truth of Chriſt's religion, as in the ſtrength of his belief to be able to work miracles, as was uſual in the firſt times of chriſtianity, *yet if he have not charity, his faith is nothing* [e]. If it be ſaid, that the charity that St. Paul makes ſo neceſſary to effectual faith, is not giving alms, but quite another thing; for, according to him, a man may give all his goods to feed the poor, and yet want the charity he ſpeaks of: I anſwer, it is true, a man may give alms, and very largely, and yet want that charity that St. Paul here ſo much recommends; but then on the other ſide, none can have that charity that

[a] 1 John iii. 17. [b] Ib. chap. iv. 20. [c] James ii. 26. [d] Gal. v. 6. [e] 1 Cor. xiii. 2.

that he ſpeaks of, but they will certainly expreſs it in alms and bounty, as they have ability and opportunity: So that, for all this ſuggeſtion, alms and bounty are abſolutely neceſſary to the efficacy of faith, if there be opportunity of doing them: The plain account of this matter is this, St. Paul ſpeaks of charity with reſpect to its inward principle in the heart, which conſiſts in an univerſal kindneſs and good will to the whole creation of God; and we ſpeak of it with reſpect to the outward fruits of it in the life and converſation, which are all ſorts of good works, eſpecially works of mercy and bounty: But both theſe come to the ſame thing as to our purpoſe; for the one always follows the other: where-ever there is charity in the heart, it muſt of neceſſity ſhew itſelf in theſe kind of actions, as there is occaſion, otherwiſe the charity is not true, but only pretended; for St. John hath told us, *He that loveth* (ἐν ἀληθείᾳ) *in truth, muſt love* (ἐν ἔργῳ) *in work and in deed.*

And then as for repentance, charity and alms-giving is a neceſſary ingredient to that alſo. When St. John Baptiſt [f] came preaching repentance unto Iſrael, the people aſked him, ſaying, *What ſhall we do?* meaning in what manner they ſhould expreſs their repentance: His anſwer was this, *He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do ſo likewiſe*; and ſuitable to this, was the prophet's advice to the king of Babylon, when he exhorteth him to repentance, *Break off thy ſins*, (ſaith he) *by righteouſneſs, and thy iniquity, by ſhewing mercy to the poor* [g]; that is, evidence thy repentance by thy alms-giving and charity.

[f] Luke iii. 10, 11. [g] Dan. iv. 27.

Furthermore, can he be either a good man or a good chriſtian, that lives in the habitual neglect of that, which of all other virtues God in ſcripture ſeems to ſet the greateſt value upon; and contrary-wiſe practiſeth that which God hath moſt particularly declared his hatred and averſion to? Yet thus doth he that is not charitable with what he hath. So highly acceptable to God are works of mercy and charity, that they are declared to be *the ſacrifices with which he is well-pleaſed*, Heb. xiii. 8. *the things in which he doth delight*, Jerem. ix. 24. and *bleſſed* and *happy* are they pronounced that do them, Prov. xxii. 9. cap. xiv. 21. for hereby men become *the children of God*, Luke vi. 35. and intitled to his more eſpecial care and protection, Pſal. xli, 1, *&c.* nay, ſo dear do they render a man to his maker, that the wiſe ſon of Sirach ſcrupled not to recommend the practice of them in theſe terms, *Be thou* (ſaith he [h]) *a father to the fatherleſs, and inſtead of a huſband unto their mother; ſo ſhalt thou be as the Son of the Moſt High, and he ſhall love thee more than thine own mother doth.*

On the other ſide, if we will believe the ſcripture, there is nothing more odious to God than the contrary qualities and practices. *The love of money*, which is the foundation of all uncharitableneſs, is in ſcripture [i] called *the root of all evil*; as certainly the greateſt evils and miſchiefs in the world do often take their beginning from thence. Thoſe that are *covetous*, are ſtiled [k] by the name of *Idolaters*, than which no more hateful appellation can be given to a man in the ſacred language. It is ſaid [l] of the *covetous*, that God *abhorreth them*; which implies the utmoſt averſion that the divine nature is capable of, to any ſort of men or

[h] Eccluſ. iv. 10. [i] 1 Tim. vi. 10. [k] Eph. v. 5. [l] Pſ. x. 3.

or things. The uncharitable and hard-hearted men, God hath declared, he will have no mercy on; *but they shall have judgment without mercy, that have shewed no mercy* [m].

Fourthly and lastly, A necessity there is, that *those that are rich in this world, should do good, and be rich in good works*, &c. upon their own account. Tho' there were no other tie upon them, yet self-love and self-preservation would oblige them to it. I meddle not here, how far in point of worldly interest they are concerned to be charitable, though even the motives drawn from hence are very considerable. For certainly, charity is a means, not only to preserve and secure to them what they have, and to make them enjoy it more comfortably, but also to increase their store. No man is ever poorer for what he gives away in useful charity; but on the contrary he thrives better for it. God seldom fails, in this world, amply to repay what is thus lent to him, besides the other blessings that accompany his store, and go along with it to his children after him. This I am sure is solemnly promised, and in the ordinary dispensations of providence we see it generally made good: Whereas to the greedy and penurious man all things fall out quite contrary; he may have wealth, but he hath little comfort in it; for a curse generally attends it, of which he feels the sad effects in a various, miserable and vexatious life, and often in either having none, or an unfortunate posterity.

But this is not the thing that I mean to insist on. This world lasts but for a while, and it is no great matter how we fare in it; but we have souls that must live for ever. If therefore men have any kindness for

[m] James ii. 13.

them, if they mean not to be undone to all eternity, it is absolutely necessary they should do good with what they have. O that uncharitable rich men would think upon that woe that our Saviour pronounceth against them, *Woe unto you that are rich, for ye have received your consolation*[n]. O that they would seriously consider, and often remember those words of *Abraham* to the rich man in hell, *Son*, (saith he[o]) *remember that thou in thy life receivedst thy good things, and Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.* Not that it is a crime to be rich, or to have good things in our life; no, it is the inordinate love of their wealth (to which those that have it are too frequently prone) and their not employing it to those purposes of doing good, for which it was given; it is these things that bring these curses upon them, and really *make it easier*, without an hyperbole, *for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven*, Luke xviii. 25. Certain it is, there is no one sin that can be named, doth more fatally exclude from salvation than this we are speaking of. We never find the prophets, or the apostles, giving a list of those black crimes that will involve all that are guilty of them in inevitable destruction, but we are sure to meet with covetousness and all the attendants of it among them; as many instances might be given. Nay, so great is this sin of uncharitableness, and not doing good with our wealth, that God in the final sentence that he shall pass upon wicked men, to their condemnation at the last day, seems to take no notice of the other sins and crimes of their life, but only to censure them for this. Thus[p] we

[n] Luke vi. 24. [o] Ibid. xvi. 25. [p] Matt. xxv. 31, &c.

we find, that when the King, having gathered all nations before him, comes to pronounce the sentence upon those on his left-hand, who are those that are doomed to everlasting fire; there is no mention made of their criminal actions; they are not condemned for fraud and oppression, for unbelief and irreligion, for lewdness and debauchery, tho' any of these be enough to damn a man; but merely for their not doing good, for their not relieving the necessitous, and exercising other acts of charity, when it was in their power.

Since now, from these considerations, it doth appear how necessary, how indispensable a duty it is *to do good* with what we have, to be *rich in good works, to be ready to distribute, and willing to communicate*; let me, at this time, charge all of you, that are *rich in this world*, as you will not be unthankful to your benefactor, nor unjust to your neighbours; as you have any piety towards God, or any care of your own souls, that you put it in practice. And two instances of this great duty, the present occasion, and the exigence of things, doth oblige me, more particularly, to recommend to you:

The first is, the business of the hospitals; the encouraging and promoting that charity which the piety of our ancestors begun, and whose examples, their successors have hitherto worthily followed, and of which we see excellent effects at this day; for this we need no better proof, than the report given in of the great number of poor children, and other poor people maintained in the several hospitals, under the pious care of the lord-mayor, commonalty, and citizens of London, the year last past.

For these so great instances of charity what have we to do, but with all gratitude to commemorate those noble

noble and public ſpirits, that firſt began them; and with all devotion to put up our prayers to God, for all thoſe now alive, that have been promoters and encouragers of ſuch good works; and laſtly, with all chearfulneſs and diligence, to follow theſe patterns, by liberally contributing to their maintenance and advancement. Theſe are the public banks and treaſuries, in which we may ſafely lodge that money which we lend out to God, and may from him expect the intereſt. O what comfort will it be to us when we come to die, to be able to ſay to ourſelves, That portion of goods that God hath in his providence diſpenſed to me, I have neither kept unprofitably in a napkin, nor ſquandered it away upon my luſts; but part of it I have put out towards the reſtoring my miſerable brethren to the right uſe of their reaſon and underſtanding,; part of it to the amending mens manners, and from idle and diſſolute perſons, redeeming them to virtue and ſobriety, and making them ſome way profitable to the public; part of it for the healing the ſick, and curing the wounded, and relieving the miſerable and neceſſitous; and laſtly, another part of it, towards the educating poor helpleſs children in uſeful arts for their bodies, and in the principles of true religion for their ſouls; that ſo both in their bodies and ſpirits, they may be in a capacity to glorify God, and to ſerve their country. Theſe are all great things, and in which way ſoever of them we lay out ourſelves, we ſerve excellent ends of charity.

But there is another point of uſeful public charity, which though the occaſion of this meeting hath nothing to do with it, yet the preſent neceſſity of the thing doth oblige me ſeriouſly to recommend to you.

There

There are few, I believe in this city, either ignorant or insensible of the extreme numerousness of beggars in our streets, and unless care be taken, their number is likely to increase; for this seems to be a growing evil. I dare not lay the fault of this upon the defectiveness of our laws; nor dare I say, that the provisions made for the poor are incompetent, and disproportionable to the number of them; for, perhaps, the usual public taxes and private free-will offerings, discreetly managed, would go a great way towards the curing this evil; supposing the richer parishes to contribute to the maintaining the poorer. But here is the misery: We do not sufficiently distinguish between our poor; nor take care to make provisions for them according to their respective necessities. There are some, that by reason either of old age, or evil accidents, are perfectly unable to earn a livelihood for themselves, or to be any way useful to the public, except by their prayers and their good examples; and to see such go a begging, is a shame to our christianity, and a reproach to our government. There are others that are fit to labour, and might prove useful members of the commonwealth, many ways, if they were rightly managed: Now the true charity to these, is not to relieve them, to the encouragement of their idleness, but to employ them, to put them into such a way, that they may both maintain themselves, and help towards the maintaining of others, and if they refuse this, let them suffer for their folly; for there is no reason that those should eat, that will not work, if they be able. A necessity therefore there is, if ever this scandalous public nuisance of common begging be redressed, that these four things be taken care of: 1. That those that cannot work, be maintained without begging. 2. That those that can work,

and

and are willing, have such public provisions made, that they may be employed in one way or other, according as they are capable, and every one receive fruits of his labour proportionable to his industry. 3. That those that can work, and will not, be prosecuted according to the laws, as rogues and vagrants, and pests of the kingdom. And, lastly, after such public provisions are made for the maintaining both sorts of poor that are objects of charity; that is, the helpless, and those that endeavour to help themselves; that all persons be exhorted and directed to put their private charity in the right channel, wholly withdrawing it from the lazy and the lusty beggars, lest they be thereby encouraged in their infamous course of life, and giving it to those who by public order shall be recommended to them.

These things, I hope, I may, without offence, recommend to the wisdom and care of the government of this honourable city, since there are both heads enow to contrive the particular ways of curing those evils, and hands enow that will be open to contribute what is needful to so useful a work. Certain it is, the thing is practicable, since it hath been, and is practised in some towns of this nation, and in several beyond the seas. And that it is needful, there is none that has any true sense of charity (which consists as much in taking care to prevent the miseries and necessities of mankind, as in relieving them;) there is none that hath any regard to the reputation of our religion, or the honour and good government of this city or kingdom, but must needs acknowledge.

It is one of the great glories of this city, that as they have been always faithful and prudent in the management of those public charities that they have been entrusted with, so they have been very ready to increase

crease and to add to them. And God, without doubt, hath blessed them the more for this very thing; as indeed the best atonement that any people can make for the many sins that the place is guilty of, is the sacrifice of alms and charity. And I hope that which condemned Sodom, to wit, that *there were not ten righteous men found it*, (that is, men that were of a public spirit, that were truly liberal, and bountiful, and charitable, for that is an usual notion of righteousness in the Old-testament, and there are some passages in this history, which make it probable that it may be the notion of it here) I say, that very thing, it is to be hoped, hath and will preserve this city of ours; because, as far as we can gather, there are in it many times ten such righteous persons. In truth, if there were not several good men among us, that by the exemplarity of their lives, and their charity, do stand in the gap between the reigning sins of the times, and the judgments of God that threaten us for them; it would be a melancholy thing to think what would become of us. But so long as God is pleased to continue to us a succession of those that fear God, and hate covetousness; that make it their business to do good, and to serve their generation, there are hopes that he will yet continue to bless us. And so gracious hath God been to our city and kingdom in this respect, that (to the glory of his name be it spoken) whatever boasts they of the church of Rome are wont to make of the charitableness of their religion, in opposition to the penuriousness of ours; and reproach us with the bounty and munificence of our popish ancestors, and the barrenness of their protestant successors; yet we may safely affirm, that there have been more public works of charity done in this city and kingdom since the reformation, than can be proved to

have been done in the same compass of years during all the time that popery prevailed among us.

O therefore let us go on to do this honour to our religion; let us go on by our good works to adorn the doctrine of God that we profess. Let us not only equal, but labour to exceed the piety and the public-spiritedness of our forefathers. Let every one, both magistrates and people, in their several capacities, be zealous and vigorous both in consulting, in contriving, and in acting for the public good, as much as is possible.

And for your greater encouragement thus to do, let it be remembered, in the last place, that besides the outward advantages both public and private that we reap by being charitable, this is the best course we can take to secure our everlasting happiness in the world to come. For *to do good* with our wealth, *to be rich in good works, to be ready to distribute, willing to communicate, is* (as the apostle in the text tells us) *the way to lay up to ourselves in store a good foundation against the time to come, that we may lay hold on eternal life.* And this is the third thing I am to insist on from the text.

I mean not here to trouble you with the criticisms about the word θεμέλιος, in the text, by disputing whether it should be rendered Foundation, as it is in our translation; though to lay up a foundation seems an unusual way of speaking; we do not lay up foundations, but build upon them: or whether the word should be taken to signify the bond or the evidence that God hath given us for the performance of this part of the covenant; as it is used by this apostle else-where, where he tells us, that the *foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal* [q]; that is to say, that covenant or indenture

[q] 2 Tim. iii. 19.

indenture, that God hath made with mankind, standeth sure, and hath this seal put to it; for men do not put seals to foundations, but to covenants: or lastly, whether the word should be rendered a treasure, so as to read the text thus, *laying up to themselves a good treasure against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.* The original word (say the learned [r]) is capable of being translated all these ways, and the last seems as natural as any; for to lay up treasure to ourselves against the time to come, is a proper way of speaking, and that which our Saviour frequently useth in that very thing we are here treating of. But it matters not much which of them to pitch upon, for they all come to one sense; and that is this, That to be very charitable in this world, is a good means to secure to ourselves a title to eternal happiness in the next.

But to prevent all misunderstanding, that may happen of this point, I desire, before I speak directly to it, to premise these two things:

First, Though we do maintain with the ancient church, the efficacy of charity and good works for the furthering a man's salvation, yet we utterly reject those doctrines which the modern Romanists have advanced in this matter. The popish doctrines about good works are these three following: That good works are meritorious; do deserve the favour and the reward of God almighty: Again, that the surplusage of a man's good works, that is to say, the merits of so many of his good deeds, as are over and above what is sufficient to save his own soul, may, by the church, be dispensed out to the benefit of others, they being part of the church's treasure; and upon this foundation they ground their indulgences: And lastly, that good works,

[r] *Vid.* Dr. Hammond, *in loc.*

works, *i. e.* the alms of dying persons, that are given to the church or clergy, will, by the means of the masses and dirges that they purchase to be said for them, be effectual for the freeing their souls out of the torments of purgatory. These are the popish doctrines concerning good works, which we all justly reject, as having no foundation in scripture, or good antiquity; and being apparently contrived for the promoting their secular gain and advantage. But then as for the necessity, or the conduciveness of good works to a man's salvation, which is all we here plead for, I know no good protestant but doth as earnestly contend for it as any of that communion.

Secondly, Whatever efficacy we attribute to works of charity, as a means for the obtaining eternal life; we would not be understood hereby to exclude the necessary concurrence of other virtues and graces to that end. It doth not from hence follow, that it is an indifferent matter what religion a man is of, or what kind of life he leads, if he be but mighty bountiful to the poor, and do a great deal of good in his life: No, how acceptable to God soever the sacrifice of alms and charity be, yet we are not to expect it shall be available to our salvation, unless it proceed from a pure heart, and be offered with a lively faith in Jesus Christ, and accompanied with a sincere endeavour to obey all God's commandments. Eternal happiness is not proposed in the gospel as a reward of any one singular virtue, no, not of the greatest, but of all of them together; if indeed there can be any true virtue where there is not a conjunction of all; I say, if there can be, for St. James [s] seems to affirm that there cannot: *Whosoever*

[s] James ii. 10.

ſoever (ſaith he) *ſhall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.*

But now having ſaid this by way of caution, to prevent all occaſion that any may take from our ſo earneſtly preſſing charity, to undervalue and neglect other duties; it cannot be denied, on the other ſide, that very great effects are, by our Saviour and his apoſtles, aſcribed to this virtue, with reſpect to mens ſalvation in the other world.

In the ſixth of St. Luke, [t] our Lord thus adviſeth, *Love* (ſaith he) *your enemies, give to him that aſketh, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again, ſo ſhall your reward be great, and ye ſhall be the children of the higheſt.* Now ſure to be entitled to great rewards, and to be the children of the Moſt High, doth look farther than this preſent world. Our Saviour, without doubt, means the ſame thing here that he expreſſes upon the ſame occaſion in another place, viz. *They* (thoſe that you do good to) *cannot recompenſe you, but you ſhall be recompenſed at the reſurrection of the juſt* [u].

Again, the parable of the *unjuſt ſteward*, [w] that provided ſo well for himſelf againſt a bad time, out of his maſter's goods, is wholly deſigned to this purpoſe; and that the application of it ſufficiently ſhews; for our Saviour having ſaid, that the lord of this ſteward commended him for his providence and care of himſelf, he thus applies it to all his diſciples [x]: *Wherefore I ſay unto you, make you friends to yourſelves of the mammon of unrighteouſneſs* (i. e. of theſe falſe deceitful riches) *that when you fail, you may be received into everlaſting habitations*; plainly declaring that the beſt proviſion

[t] Luke vi. 30,—35. [u] Luke xiv. 14. [w] Luke xvi. [x] Ib. ver. 9.

provision that rich men can make for themselves against the time of their death, in order to their reception into the other world, must be the charitable actions they do with their wealth while they live here.

Lastly, In another place our Saviour saith the very same thing, in effect, that is said in the text; for this is his counsel to all that mean to be happy in the next life, viz. that they *sell all that they have*[y] (that is, when the times are such that it is reasonable so to do) that *they give alms*; *for thereby they provide to themselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens, where no thief approacheth, nor moth corrupteth.*

To these three texts of our Saviour's, I shall add three others of three of his apostles, which speak just to the same effect, and with them I shall conclude. The first is that of St. Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews; where having spoken most severe things, and denounced no less than hell-fire against the false brethren among them, yet thus he comforts the church to whom he writes: *But, beloved* (saith he[z]) *we are persuaded better things of you, and things that do accompany salvation, though we thus speak.* And what, I pray, is the reason he is thus persuaded? Verily this, *for God* (saith he[a]) *is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which you have shewed to his name, in that ye have ministred to the saints, and yet do minister.* It was purely their charity to the brethren, that made him have these good hopes of them, that they were in a state of salvation. Though that church, as to other things, was in a very degenerate condition, yet considering they had been laborious and diligent in the exercise of charity, and still continued so to be, *God would not forget them*; nay, he was not so *unrighteous*

[y] Luke xii. 33. [z] Heb. vi. 9. [a] Ib. ver. 11.

righteous as to forget them. And then, that which follows in the next verse is very observable; *And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence*, (to wit, in the practice of charity) *to the full assurance of hope unto the end*[b]. If they would have their hopes of a future life assured to them, the way to do it was to persevere in their diligent attendance to works of mercy and kindness, and charity.

The second passage is that of St. John; *Hereby* (saith he[c]) *perceive we the love of God towards us, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother hath need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth, and hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.* I pray mind that; by our charitable disposition and doing good to our brethren, by this we know we are true disciples of Jesus Christ, and this is that that will assure our hearts, will give us confidence to appear before God at the last day, when he comes to judge the world. And this is a point that the apostle thinks so considerable, that he goes over with it again in the next verse, *Beloved, if our hearts condemn us not*, (i. e. condemn us not, as to this point of love and charity) *then have we confidence towards God, and whatsoever we ask we shall receive of him, because we do those things that are pleasing in his sight.*

The last text to this purpose that I desire may be taken notice of, is that of St. Peter[d], *Above all things, my brethren, have fervent charity among yourselves, for charity*

[b] Heb. vi. 12. [c] 1 John iii. 15. &c. [d] 1 Pet. iv. 8.

charity shall cover the multitude of sins. O how comfortable are these words! There is none of us, even the best, but hath a multitude of sins to answer for; by what means now must we obtain, that these sins should be covered? that is, shall be forgiven [e]; for covering of sins is the forgiveness of them in the scripture-language. Why, the apostle hath directed us to the method, *Above all things put on charity, for it is charity that shall cover a multitude of sins.* Charity is of that power with God, that it alone is able to overcome the malignity of many of our sins and frailties, that would otherwise do us mischief: If any thing can make atonement for the carelessness, and the many failings of our lives, and prevent the punishment that is due to them, it is to be very charitable, and to do much good: *Charity covereth a multitude of sins in this life.* A great many temporal judgments, that would otherwise have fallen upon us for our sins, are hereby prevented, and that not only private ones, but public too: and I think it no popery to affirm, *that charity will cover a multitude of sins in the other life also*; that is, whoever is of a true charitable disposition, and doth a great deal of good in his generation, tho' he may have a great many infirmities and miscarriages to answer for, yet if he be sincerely virtuous in the main, and so capable of the rewards of the other world, his other failings will be overlooked, they will be buried in his good deeds, and the man shall be rewarded notwithstanding. Or if he be a vicious person, and so must of necessity fall short of the glory that shall be revealed; yet still in proportion, the good he hath done in his life *will cover the multitude of sins.* Though it will not be available for the making him happy, because he is not capable

[e] Psal xxxiii. 1.

capable of being so; yet it will be for the lessening his punishment. He shall be in a much more supportable condition among the miserable, than those that have been unmerciful, or cruel, or uncharitable in their lives. O therefore what remains, but that considering all these things, we should *be stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in these works of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*[f] *? Giving all diligence to add to faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity*[g]. *By our good works, making our calling and election sure,* (so some copies have the 10th verse of 1 Pet. i.) *that doing these things we may never fall: but an entrance may be ministred to us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ*[h].

[f] 1 Cor. xxv. 18. [g] 2 Pet. i. 5, *&c.* [h] Ib. ver. 10.

SER-

SERMON V.

A description of the Upright Man, and his Security in evil times.

Psalm cxii. 4.

To the upright there ariseth light in the darkness.

Godliness, (saith St. Paul [a]) *hath the promise of this life, as well as of that which is to come.* Of this proposition of his, the psalm we have now before us, may seem to be an explication or paraphrase.

For in this psalm two things are designed, a description of the pious man; and a description of his blessedness in this life: Each of which is done in five instances or particulars.

The terms wherein the pious man is here described, are these following:

First, He is one that *feareth God, and greatly delighteth in his commandments*, ver. 1.

Secondly, He is one that is *righteous* and *upright* in his conversation, *ver.* 4. and 6.

Thirdly, He is one that is prudent and discreet in the managing of his affairs, *ver.* 5. *He guideth his affairs with discretion.*

Fourthly,

[a] 1 Tim. iv. 8.

Fourthly, He is one whoſe *heart is fixed, truſting in the Lord*, ver. 7.

Laſtly, He is one that is extremely charitable. He is *gracious and full of compaſſion*, ver. 4. *He ſheweth favour and lendeth*, ver. 5. *He hath diſperſed. He hath given to the poor*, ver. 9.

Now the bleſſedneſs of ſuch a man as this, as to this life, is deſcribed in the five inſtances following:

The firſt of which is a great and happy poſterity; thus, ver. 2. *His ſeed ſhall be mighty upon earth; the generation of the upright ſhall be bleſſed.*

The ſecond is a plentiful and an ample fortune; thus in the third verſe, *Riches and plenteouſneſs ſhall be in his houſe.*

The third is a laſting fame and reputation; thus again in the third verſe, *His righteouſneſs remaineth for ever*; and likewiſe in the ſixth verſe, *He ſhall be had in everlaſting remembrance.*

The fourth is honour, and power, and dignity, even ſuch as ſhall excite the envy of the wicked; thus in the ninth verſe, *His horn ſhall be exalted with honour, the wicked ſhall ſee it, and ſhall be grieved*, &c.

The fifth is great ſafety and peace in the midſt of dangerous and troubleſome times: Thus in the text, *To the upright there ariſeth light in the darkneſs*, i. e. light in the greateſt ſtreights and difficulties; for that is the meaning of darkneſs in this place. Times of darkneſs, in the ſcripture-language, are evil, and difficult and dangerous times. Now upon account of this light that ariſeth to the upright man in evil times, it comes to paſs as it followeth, ver. 6, 7, 8. that ſuch a one *ſhall not be moved for ever, neither ſhall he be afraid of evil-tiding, for his heart is eſtabliſhed, and he ſhall not ſhrink, until he ſee his deſire upon his enemies.*

Or, as the Chaldee perhaps better renders it, *until he ſee redemption in diſtreſs.*

This is the juſt analyſis of the whole pſalm. Now of theſe ſeveral characters whereby the pious man is deſcribed, I have pitched upon that of his uprightneſs to give an account of, and to recommend to you at this time. And of the ſeveral inſtances of the bleſſedneſs of ſuch a man, I have pitched upon that of ſafety and peace in the midſt of perilous and troubleſome times. Theſe two points I have choſen to entertain you upon, as judging them moſt ſuitable to the preſent occaſion, and to our preſent circumſtances. And we find them both joined together in the words of the text, *To the upright there ariſeth light in the darkneſs.*

Here then we have two things to conſider; Firſt, The perſon to whom the promiſe here made, or the bleſſedneſs here mentioned, doth belong: It is the upright man. Secondly, The promiſe, or the bleſſedneſs itſelf: It is light in times of darkneſs.

I begin with the character of the perſon to whom this promiſe is made. He is the upright man; or as in our more common language we expreſs him, the honeſt man, the man of integrity. We all know ſo well, what is meant by theſe words, that it would render the thing more difficult to offer critically to give light to them. As all thoſe general terms, whereby a man's whole duty is expreſſed in ſcripture, have their ſeveral reſpects and conſiderations which difference them one from the other, though they be all equally comprehenſive; ſo hath this term of uprightneſs. That which it immediately and particularly reſpects is the goodneſs of a man's principles, and the ſuitableneſs of his actions to them. Or thus, the conformity of a man's mind to the eternal rules of righteouſneſs, and the

the conformity of his actions to the principles of his mind. This is that upon account of which any person is denominated upright, and contrary to this is all hypocritical and partial dealings in matters of our duty. So that if we would give the definition of an upright man, it should be in such terms as these: He is a man that in all things follows the dictates of his conscience. Or, he is one, that makes his duty the rule of his actions. Or, he is one, that always proposeth to himself righteous ends, and pursues those ends in righteous ways.

This is the general description of the upright man: But for the more lively display of him, and the rendring him, as more amiable, so more imitable, it will be fit that we represent him a little more particularly under those several respects and capacities, in which his uprightness is principally seen and express'd.

And here we must consider him with respect to God, and with respect to men. Under the former consideration we are to view his religion, under the latter his civil conversation.

And none ought to be surprized, that in the character of an upright man, we take notice of his religious carriage towards God. For in truth, that is a point which is essentially necessary to uprightness. He (saith Solomon [b]) *that walketh in uprightness, feareth the Lord:* Indeed, take away religion and the fear of God, and the foundation of uprightness is destroy'd. For all the principles of conscience, and all the obligation to live up to those principles, is thereby taken away. He that hath no sense of God and religion, can never think himself bound to observe any rules in his actions and behaviour, but what are subservient to the carrying on his private sensual worldly

[b] Prov. xiv. 2.

intereſt: And conſequently, whatever is inconſiſtent with that, be it never ſo baſe, and vile, and injurious, he cannot take himſelf in point of duty obliged to ſtick at it, when he hath the leaſt temptation to it. The reſult of which is, that he may commit all the villainies in the world, and yet think himſelf as innocent, and his actions as commendable, as if he had been never ſo honeſt and virtuous.

He therefore that is an upright man, hath a ſerious and hearty ſenſe of God and religion upon his ſpirit, and is above all things careful to preſerve and increaſe that ſenſe. But then his conduct in this affair is much different from that of ordinary pretenders to religion.

For he is a man that doth not content himſelf with a meer ſpeculative belief, or an outward profeſſion of the truths of religion; but doth ſo far impreſs them on his heart, that they influence his whole life and converſation. He doth not think it ſufficient to be orthodox in his opinions; or to be a member of a true church; or to be zealous in maintaining and promoting the right way: But he takes care to live as he believes; to practiſe ſuitably to the profeſſion he makes. As he holds faſt the form of godlineſs; ſo he never fails to expreſs the power of it, in an innocent and a virtuous life.

He is a man, that in the whole conduct of his religious affairs, minds conſcience more than any ſelfiſh conſideration. He takes not up his principles, either out of humour or paſſion; to advance his intereſt, or to pleaſe a party: But he believes a thing, becauſe it is true, and profeſſeth it, becauſe it is his duty. In matters of religion, he hath the indifference of a traveller, whoſe great concernment is to arrive at his jour-

journey's end; but for the way that leads thither, be it high or low, all is one to him, so long as he is but certain that it is the right way.

And as he doth not chuse his religion out of worldly considerations; so neither doth he quit it upon such: But is resolute and constant in bearing witness to the truth, against all opposition whatsoever. As he doth not make shew of his religion the more when it is in fashion, and when it may prove advantageous to him: So neither doth he practise it the less, when it may prove ignominious or dangerous. He is obstinately tenacious of his principles, when he knows them to be good; and prepared to endure the utmost extremities, rather than violate the laws and dictates of his conscience.

He is a man that thinks religion too sacred a thing to be prostituted to mean purposes; and therefore he never useth it as an instrument for the serving a turn; never makes it a cloak for the covering a private end, though he were sure he could compass his designs by it. He knows that the greatest impostures have lain hid under this mask, and by such artifices God hath been often made a patron of the most horrid villanies.

He is a man that doth not place his religion in outward forms and services; or in little cheap duties that cost him nothing. He hath a nobler sense of God, than to think that such things can alone recommend us to him: And therefore his principal concernment is about the great indispensible duties of christianity; [c] *The weightier matters of the law, justice, and mercy, and faith.* He hath the everlasting notions and differences of good and evil deeply engraven on his heart;

[c] Matt. xxiii. 23.

and in the practising or the avoiding them, he chiefly lays out himself.

He is a man, that does not pick and chuse out of God's commandments which to observe, to the neglect of the rest: But endeavours uprightly and sincerely to observe them all. He calls no sin little, because his temper inclines him to it, or the course of his life leads him more frequently into the temptations of it; but he hath an hearty uniform aversion to every thing that is evil. He holds no secret friendship or correspondence with any enemy of God: but fights as resolutely against his most agreeable and most gainful sins, as those that he hath less temptations to upon those accounts.

He is a hearty enemy to all factions in religion, as knowing the life and soul of christianity is often eaten out by them. All dividing principles he abhors; and as much as he loves truth, he is not less concerned for peace. And he is better pleased with one instance of his charity in composing, or his zeal in suppressing, religious differences, than with twenty of his skill and abilities in disputing them. For he knows that love is more acceptable to God, than a right opinion; and to be a martyr, rather than divide and rend the church, is not less glorious than to be a martyr for refusing to offer sacrifice to idols [d].

Lastly, He is a man religious without noise; and uses no little arts to make his piety taken notice of in the world. For he seeks not the praise of men in any thing he doth, but studies to approve himself to God only. And therefore he is as careful of his thoughts, as of his actions; and hath the same fear of God, and regard

[d] Dyonis. Alex. *in* Euseb.

regard of his duty, when no man ſees him; as when he is in the moſt public places.

Theſe are the great ſtrokes of uprightneſs, as to religion. And whoever makes good theſe characters, may unqueſtionably conclude of himſelf, that he is an *honeſt man to God-ward, a true Iſraelite indeed, in whom there is no guile.*

Come we now, in the ſecond place, to take a view of the upright man in his civil converſation: To give ſome account of him, with reference to his carriage and demeanour among men. And here again we muſt conſider him under two capacities; as a private perſon, and as a magiſtrate.

And firſt, as a private perſon, the general rule by which he frames and models his whole converſation, is ſuch a prudent and diligent care of himſelf, and his own good, as is not only conſiſtent with, but doth effectually tend to promote the good and happineſs of all others that he deals with. This is the fundamental principle which he lays down to obſerve in all his commerce with mankind. For he conſiders that every man in the world hath a right to be happy as well as himſelf: And he conſiders, that, as things are ſo contrived, that he cannot be happy without the aſſiſtance of others; ſo it is infinitely reaſonable, that he in like manner ſhould contribute his endeavours to the making them happy alſo. Theſe now being the main principles of his mind, he takes care in his whole converſation, that his actions and carriage be ſuitable to them, and bear ſome proportion with them.

And therefore we may be ſure that he is a man exactly juſt in all his dealings, and would not knowingly do the leaſt wrong or injury to any, tho' he could gain

never ſo much by it; and were he never ſo ſecure, that he could do it without diſcovery.

He is a man, that where he is truſted, is faithful to the uttermoſt. Never making advantages of mens credulity, nor abuſing the confidence they repoſe in him.

He is one, that in point of fair-dealing between man and man, is ſevere even to ſcrupuloſity; and he would rather ſit down with loſs, than ſerve his own ends by any practice that hath but a bad report, that hath but even the appearance or ſuſpicion of evil in it; though in the mean time he knows that what is got by ſuch practices, is by ſome men accounted lawful gain.

He is a man of great candour and ſweetneſs, and obligingneſs in his behaviour: But withal, as on one hand he is careful not to run himſelf into inconveniencies by his good nature; ſo on the other hand, the kindneſs and good-will he profeſſeth to all about him, is more than a compliment, or a ſemblance of his countenance. For his fair ſpeeches are always attended with honeſt dealings; and what he once promiſeth, he is punctual in making it good, though it be to his own prejudice.

He is a man that loves a good name and reputation, as well as any one, and is extremely tender of it; but yet he ſcorns to make uſe of any evil arts, either for the procuring, or preſerving it.

And conſequently, he is a man that hates all mean and ſervile compliance, and will neither ſpeak nor do any thing againſt the ſenſe of his mind for the humoring any. Flattery and diſſimulation he abhors, and he dares ſpeak his mind, when he judges it fit and reaſonable; even though he knows the doing it will give offence.

And

And as he is perfectly averse to all fawning and flattery; so he is above envy and detraction. He never lessens another man to make himself greater; nor looks upon the prosperity of his neighbour with an evil eye; backbiting and carrying about idle stories, is not the thing he lives by. He puts a fair construction upon other mens words and actions, and will rather conceal a real fault, than make it worse in the reporting it. He hopes and thinks the best of all men; and rejoiceth in the happiness of those about him. He doth as much good as he can; and that good that is done by others, he is so far from envying, that he thanks God for it, as if he had done it himself.

He is a man of great plainness and simplicity, apert and open, and free in all his carriage. You may always know where to have him, for his words and his thoughts always go together. And though he is careful not to be lavish of his speech, nor at all times to discover all his mind; yet he is as careful, that what he doth speak shall be agreeable to truth; and he so speaks it, that those that hear him may take measures of his mind from it.

He is a man, who though he be very watchful of opportunities to do himself good, and very sagacious in spying dangers, and avoiding them; yet he never uses any indirect means, either for the benefiting or securing himself. He scorns to make advantage of any man's necessities: Nor will he undermine another for the effecting of his own designs. Deceit and collusion are strangers to all his dealings. Above all things he hates a trick; and in his account, to be a man of intrigues, a cunning or a shrewd fellow, is but a more genteel term for a knave.

In a word, the deſigns he propoſeth to himſelf are all honeſt and juſt, and ſuch as tend to the good of the community, as well as his own, but to no man's loſs or hindrance. And the means he uſeth for accompliſhing theſe deſigns are all fair, and regular; and ſo free is both his heart and his actions from all impoſture, that he cares not if all the world were privy to them.

This is the man that is upright in his converſation towards men. The man, that with the wiſdom of the ſerpent joins the innocency and ſimplicity of the dove.

But thus much of the upright man as a private perſon; let us now view him a little under a more conſpicuous character. Let us conſider him as a magiſtrate intruſted with the management of public affairs (which is the ſecond particular we are to inſiſt on under this head:) And here the upright man is ſtill the ſame, acted by the ſame principles, purſuing ſtill the ſame deſigns we have hitherto mentioned. Only his virtues have another ſphere and another object, and therefore require another conſideration.

The great thing he propoſeth to himſelf, in taking any office upon him, is the glory of God, and the public good. The honour and dignity of the place, and the other worldly advantages that may attend it, are but ſecondary conſiderations with him. The firſt is his main deſign, which he ſteadily and conſtantly purſues throughout the whole adminiſtration of his office; the other is never thought on, but with ſubordination to the former.

And therefore acting from ſuch principles as theſe, we may eaſily conclude him to be a man, whoſe counſels and actions are not ſteered by the wind of popular applauſe,

applauſe, but by the ſenſe of his duty. He ſtudies not to ingratiate himſelf with men, but to diſcharge a good conſcience. He is more careful to be a good magiſtrate, than to be a loved one: though (ſo happily are things contrived, that) in being the former, he rarely fails of the latter.

The conſequence of which is, that he is a man of great courage, and boldneſs, and reſolution. He dares to do whatſoever is fit and juſt, and conducive to the public good, what diſcouragements ſoever he meet with. Neither the menaces of the mighty, nor the murmurings of the multitude, can fright him from his duty: For he dreads none but God; nor fears to do any thing but what is miſbecoming him.

But then he is a man that doth not reſolve things haſtily, and upon the conſideration of a few particulars, but takes good advice, and uſeth mature deliberation before he determines himſelf. He doth nothing precipitately; but weighs all things repreſented to him as impartially as he can. His ears are open to all parties, and he debates what is ſaid without paſſion or prejudice, or prepoſſeſſion; and he always conſiders more what is ſpoken, than who it is that ſpeaks it.

He is a man, whom you cannot ſo much diſoblige as by attempting to corrupt him. Neither the regard of his profit, nor his kindneſs to his friends, can, in matters of right, tempt him to act againſt his inward ſenſe. As to theſe things he is as blind as juſtice herſelf, and you may as ſoon draw the ſun from his line, as him from the ſteady and ſtrict paths of righteouſneſs.

He is a man that looks upon his office rather as a burthen, than a preferment; and therefore he is wonderfully ſollicitous about the well diſcharging it. His care and ſtudy is chiefly employed upon the public;

and he rather ſuffers the miſcarriage of his own affairs, than that the community by his negligence ſhould receive any prejudice. While others are doing their own buſineſs, he is watching for the common good; for he always remembers that he is a public perſon, and that the time and ſtrength that God affords him, are not his, but theirs by and for whom he is intruſted.

He is a man that employs all his power and intereſt, as much as is poſſible, for the maintenance of the worſhip and ſervice of God, and the defence and encouragement of the true religion: for he conſiders God, as the firſt and principal perſon to be reſpected in all governments and ſocieties, as being not only the author, but the head of them. And he remembers that religion doth ſo much influence the civil ſtate, that the happineſs and ruin of cities and kingdoms are linked with the well or ill management of it.

And in purſuance of this his zeal for God and religion, he takes care, as much as him lies, to encourage thoſe perſons that are virtuous and good, and to ſuppreſs and bring out of credit all vice and debauchery, all impiety and irreligion, all faction and diſorder, together with the maintainers and abettors of them.

He is a man that effectually makes good Job's character of himſelf, who was alſo a magiſtrate: *He puts on righteouſneſs, and it cloaths him, his judgment is a robe and a diadem: He is eyes to the blind, and feet he is to the lame: He is a father to the poor, and the cauſe which he knoweth not he ſearcheth out: He breaketh the jaws of the wicked, and plucketh the ſpoil out of his teeth* [e].

He is a man that looketh upon himſelf to have a truſt, both with reference to thoſe above him, and thoſe

[e] Job xxix. 14, &c.

thoſe under him : And therefore he is careful to carry himſelf with an even ſteady hand, with reſpect to both ; ſtudiouſly endeavouring both to preſerve his allegiance to his prince, and his fidelity to the public ; neither invading the rights of the one, nor injuring the liberties of the other.

He is one, that, next to the honour of God, ſtudies the peace and quiet of the place where he is concerned. And therefore, as on one hand he is watchful in ſpying out dangers, and quick in applying ſuch remedies to them as are proper in the place and ſtation he holds ; ſo on the other ſide, he neither takes nor gives the alarm upon every ſlight ſurmiſe, or popular apprehenſion. He makes the beſt of all things that happen ; and by his prudence and moderation, endeavours to extinguiſh growing flames, rather than add fewel to them ; to calm and allay mens jealouſies and animoſities, rather than to excite and increaſe them.

Laſtly, To conclude ; he is a man that fears God, that honours the king ; that is obſervant of the laws ; that is true to the government : and that *meddles not with them that are given to change.*

Having thus given you an account of the upright man, under the ſeveral principal relations in which he ſtands ; I come now, in the ſecond place, for the comfort of all that are ſuch, and for the encouragement of all others to endeavour to be ſuch ; to ſet forth the advantages and privileges. that ſuch a man enjoys in evil and dangerous times. *To the upright there ariſeth light in darkneſs.*

Darkneſs, as I told you before, is a word by which the ſcripture expreſſeth any kind of ſtraits, or difficulties, or adverſities. Thus Job xv. 11. darkneſs is there oppoſed

to prosperity; thus, Lam. iii. 2. *I am the man*, (saith the prophet) *that hath seen affliction; by the rod of his wrath he hath led me and brought me into darkness.* And thus likewise, to name no more texts, Joel ii. 2. the day of God's visitation upon Jerusalem is called *a day of gloominess and darkness; a day of clouds and thick darkness.*

This now being the notion of darkness; when it is said in the text, *To the upright man there ariseth light in the darkness*; by light we may understand any one of these three things; that is to say:

By light, we may understand light for his guidance and direction; and then the sense is, that in critical and perilous times, the upright man, of all others, will be best enabled to order and manage his affairs.

Or secondly, By light, we may understand safety and defence, as the word is sometimes taken in scripture; and then the sense is, that in evil times the upright man walks most free from danger: He, of all others, may expect security and protection in a common calamity.

Or thirdly, By light, we may understand peace and joy (as that likewise is another usual sense of the word) and then the meaning is, that in evil times, let things happen as they will, though it should be the fortune of the upright man to be oppressed in the crowd; yet this happiness he will always have, that his mind will be at perfect ease and peace: Nothing shall ever discompose him, but in the midst of his suffering his heart shall be replenished with perpetual comfort.

In any one of these senses the text may be taken, and in all the three it fails not to be made good to the upright man.

First,

First, *To the upright man there ariseth light in the darkness*, taking light for guidance and direction. Be the times never so dark, he hath this happiness, that he is rarely at a loss how to steer his course. He finds his way easily, when other men are quite bewilder'd; and he readily expedites himself out of such difficulties, as those that act by other principles find themselves grievously intangled with. This is a thing that should mightily recommend the practice of uprightness, especially in evil times; and that it is really attended with this advantage, must needs be acknowledged upon these two accounts:

First, To an upright man, his way lies plainer, and is more easily seen and discovered.

And secondly, He hath a greater light to see it by, than those that take other measures in the management of their designs.

First, The upright man, of all others, most easily sees his way, for it lies plain, and even, and strait before him. Whereas the ways of vice and wickedness are extremely crooked, and full of windings and turnings.

Whoever pursues evil designs, and is a slave to base affections, must necessarily intangle himself in infinite labyrinths through the course of his life. For having several ends to pursue, and those many times inconsistent one with another, it cannot be avoided but that in many circumstances he lights into, he will be extremely at a loss how to behave himself. If he go this way, then will something come to light, which he studiously endeavours to conceal; if he go that way, then he disobliges some man or some party, whose interest is necessary to support him; if he go a third way, he destroys that which is his main design. At what a loss now in such a case as this, must a man needs be

in

in the determining himſelf? Upon what a rack is his underſtanding put, to get fairly rid of theſe difficulties? And yet ſuch dilemma's as theſe is every one that walks not uprightly, ever and anon crampt with in his counſels and deliberations.

But ſuppoſe he get well over the preſent difficulty, yet he is but where he was; for upon the next emergency of affairs, he is as much puzzled and nonplus'd as before. The ſame method will not ſerve him twice, for the carrying on his deſigns. As often as new occaſions ariſe, ſo often muſt he alter his counſels, and take new meaſures: So that he is always unſteady, often inconſiſtent with himſelf; utterly unreſolv'd what man he ſhall be, or what part he ſhall act, in the next ſcene that offers itſelf.

Theſe difficulties and perplexities the man of intrigues is always hamper'd with; and they neceſſarily ariſe from the various flexures and turnings of the way that leads to his ends: But the contrary of all this is the lot of the upright man: for his way neither lies on this ſide, nor on that ſide, but always ſtrait forward. He hath but one great end to purſue, and that is to diſcharge a good conſcience: All his other concernments are wholly regulated by that. The conſequence of which is, that he hath no claſhing of intereſts to perplex his deliberations; no little turns that muſt be ſerved, to divert him to the right hand or to the left, but he always looks ſtrait before him: So that all his reſolutions are eaſily made; moſt of thoſe difficulties that entangle other men, are quite cut off and avoided; his counſels and his methods are always the ſame, and he is ſeldom at a loſs how to behave himſelf upon a new emergency. In a word, his way is commonly ſo plain, that he ſtands in need of little advice or inſtruction

ſtruction for the finding it. And this is that which Solomon hath told us, *The integrity of the upright ſhall guide him:* For *the path of the juſt is a ſhining light* [f].

But ſecondly, If it be his lot to fall into ſuch circumſtances, where his way is not ſo plain, but that there is need of great advice and deliberation what courſe to ſteer; as it often happens, eſpecially in ſuch times as the text ſpeaks of: Yet here the upright man hath the advantage of all thoſe that walk by different principles: for (all other things equal) he has more light to direct him in the finding of his way, than they have.

There is this difference between a man that walks uprightly in all his converſation, and a man that hath ſiniſter ends of his own to purſue: The former hath always the free uſe of his intellectual powers, and can exert his reaſon in its higheſt perfection, and to the beſt advantage: whereas the latter is horribly clouded in his diſcerning faculties, he hath conſtantly a miſt before his eyes, which hinders him from rightly diſtinguiſhing the objects he looks upon; and conſequently occaſions many blunders and miſtakes in the choice of his way.

My meaning is this, whoever frames his life by other meaſures, than thoſe of honeſty and conſcience, whoever intemperately purſueth his private ends, or is a ſlave to inordinate paſſions, let them be of what kind they will; theſe things do clap ſuch a bias upon his ſoul, as renders him utterly uncapable of making a right judgment of things before him, and conſequently muſt unavoidably expoſe him to a great many dangerous errors, in the management of his affairs; and this

[f] Prov. xi. 3. Cap. iv. 18.

this oftentimes in matters that have no great difficulty in them.

Take any one of the paſſions that uſually govern the man that hath no principles of conſcience; let it be either fear, or envy, or revenge, or vain-glory, or avarice, or ambition; it is a wonderful thing to ſee how monſtrouſly they diſtort his reaſon, and what odd extravagant courſes they put him upon; and this even in plain eaſy caſes; nay, though the man in other things, where his affections have no influence, be a very wiſe man. One could ſcarce imagine the power that theſe things have over a man's judgment; but that we every day ſee ſuch ſtrange inſtances of it.

But now the upright man is not in the leaſt obnoxious to any of theſe inconveniencies; for having no turns to ſerve, but thoſe that are honeſt and good; having no private affections or paſſions to be gratified; he looks upon things in a pure and ſimple light, and not through a coloured glaſs. And conſequently his conceptions of them, as far as human endeavours can ſecure, are according to their nature; and his determinations and reſolutions are ſuitable to his conceptions; that is to ſay, are reaſonable and fit, and ſuch as become the occaſion. As his main deſign is to do in all inſtances that which is beſt; ſo that deſign preſerves him from miſtaking in his notions of what is beſt. His reaſon and underſtanding are free and at liberty, and if there do ariſe any knot or difficulty, he of all others is likely to untie it with the greateſt eaſe. And this is that which the Pſalmiſt hath told us, *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wiſdom; a good underſtanding have all they that do thereafter* [g].

But,

[g] Pſal. cxi. 10.

But, secondly, If we take light for safety and security, for defence and protection, as it is sometimes used in the holy scripture; in this sense also, *light ariseth to the upright in times of darkness.* For such a man may in the worst of times, above all other men, promise these things to himself. And this is that which Solomon tells us, *he that walketh uprightly walketh surely*[h]. And indeed this seems to be the thing principally intended in the text; the light which is here said to arise to the upright in darkness, seemeth chiefly to respect his security from danger in the times of a common calamity; as appears by what immediately followeth, viz. *He shall not be moved for ever; he shall not be afraid of evil tidings, his heart shall not shrink until he see his desire upon his enemies.*

Now this security in times of danger, the upright man may expect upon these two accounts: First, his uprightness in its own nature (as things are contrived and carried on in the world) doth above all other things conduce to it. And, secondly, He is upon account thereof, intitled to God's more particular protection.

First, The paths of uprightness are in themselves such as naturally tend to secure a man in evil and dangerous times.

For, first, They do really contribute to the good and happiness of the public, in the which every man's private safety is in a manner bound up. *As by wickedness* (they are the words of Solomon) *a city is overthrown, so by the blessing of the upright it is exalted*[i]. Every upright man is really a benefactor to the public: For by him, and such as he, cities and kingdoms are supported, which would otherwise fall into confusion. The whole body politic owes its preservation to the virtuous

[h] Prov. x. 9. [i] Ibid. xi. 11.

virtuous care, and honeſt endeavours of upright men. And every ſuch man in particular, reaps the benefit of ſuch his endeavours; for he ſhares in his own perſon, that protection and ſecurity he procures to the community. And if he had not been upright, as the public would have fared ſomething the worſe for it; ſo it is certain he, in his private capacity, would, in the ſame proportion, have fared the worſe alſo.

But this conſideration of the conduciveneſs of honeſty and uprightneſs to the good of the public, I direct chiefly to thoſe that are in office and authority; for really their carriage and conduct hath a more than ordinary ſtroke, in the good or bad ſucceſs of the common affairs. And therefore, it concerns them eſpecially to look to themſelves, that they be men of integrity, and keep a good conſcience in the diſcharge of their truſt. Upon their upright walking, the ſafety and preſervation of the public doth more depend, than upon the endeavours of a thouſand private men. Though they are but particular perſons, yet being veſted with authority, their conduct and management hath as great an influence upon the common good, or the common ruin, as if they were a multitude; and ſingle as they are, they do in a great meaſure carry the ballance of the public fortune in their hands.

But, ſecondly, The conduciveneſs of every man's uprightneſs to the public good, is not the only conſideration upon which it is recommendable, as a means for obtaining ſafety and ſecurity in evil times. For let the public go as it will, in the worſt of times, if any man can in probability be thought able to ſhift for himſelf; if any man can in reaſon hope to eſcape the violence and iniquity of the times; the upright man, the man of honeſty and integrity, is likelieſt to be the man: I ſay,

I ſay, in reaſon he is likelieſt, and as things commonly go:

For he, of all others, takes the ſureſt courſe to preſerve himſelf; and is leaſt obnoxious, either to the malice or the envy, the undermining or the rapine of open enemies or pretended friends.

All knavery and diſhoneſt dealings ſet a man up for a mark to be ſhot at; but uprightneſs and integrity is a ſhield and a protection.

The upright man doth ſo order the courſe of his life, that he uſually avoids all thoſe rocks that other men ſplit upon, and which uſually prove their ruin. The undoing of moſt men, even in evil times, lies commonly at their own door, and they may thank themſelves for it. If they had been ſufficiently careful of themſelves, the malignity of the times would ſcarce have touch'd them. It is generally either very great careleſneſs, and groſs neglect of their own affairs; or the laviſhneſs or intemperance of their tongues; or an ill-gotten eſtate; or private injuries they have done, and private grudges they have contracted; or pragmaticalneſs in other mens matters; or factious adherence to a party; or breach of truſt; or treachery to the public, or the like; I ſay, it is theſe things, that do moſt commonly draw miſchief upon mens heads, and lay the foundations of all thoſe ſtreights and difficulties, in which they are entangled, even in the worſt of times. But now the upright man doth, in a great meaſure avoid all theſe occaſions; for his principles do oblige him to walk in a way, that is diametrically oppoſite to the things I have mentioned.

The upright man treads upon ſuch ſure foundations, and his ways are ſo univerſally approved by mankind; that,

that, as things usually go, no man will easily offer him injury, but it will be to his own detriment.

The rule he walks by is such as doth effectually procure him the most friends, and the fewest enemies, for he takes the course to oblige all sorts of men; and consequently he cannot easily fail of finding those who will use their utmost endeavour to assist and rescue him, when he lights into any difficult circumstances.

His righteous conversation is so unexceptionable, and so prudent he is in the management of his affairs, that those that love him not will not easily find an occasion to do him much mischief.

Even those that have no acquaintance with him, yet have so much concernment for honesty and uprightness in general, that they will study to give him what assistance and defence they can, out of a natural sense, that it is fit a good man should be protected; and that, for any thing they know, his case and circumstances may come to be theirs.

And those that have lost all sense of good and evil, yet out of care to preserve their credit amongst men (amongst the generality of whom, to be an honest man will always signify a great deal; for when all is done, it is impossible to extirpate the notions of virtue and honesty out of the minds of the multitude:) I say, in point of their own credit and interest, they are concerned to be careful how they oppress such a man.

But whatever become of these things; how ineffectual soever all human means may be for the securing and preserving an upright man in evil times; yet, in the second place, he has another anchor to stay himself upon, which is more firm and stable, and which will not fail him; and that is, the protection of God Almighty; the care of his particular providence, to which he is intitled. Men

Men may plot and design; may model and contrive; may order and manage things as they please: but when all is done, it is God that governeth the world; and either blasts their most fair and hopeful projects, or, if he suffers them to succeed, turns them to what use and purposes he pleases: Now this God that rules and disposeth all things (even the most particular; *For not a sparrow doth fall to the ground without his will; and by him the very hairs of our head are numbered*) this God hath engaged himself, to take care, in an especial manner, of those that fear him, and walk uprightly before him.

He hath passed his promise, over and over again, that he will *make their righteousness as clear as the light, and their just dealing as the noon-day. They shall not be confounded in the perilous times, and in the days of dearth, they shall have enough. Though they fall, they shall not be cast down, for the Lord upholdeth them with his hand.* In a word, that he *will be their strength in the time of trouble; he will stand by them, and save them, he will deliver them from the ungodly; he will save them, because they put their trust in him*[f].

It would be endless to quote all the passages in the book of God that speak to this purpose. And therefore I shall dismiss this point, with that remarkable one, which we find in the prophecy of *Isaiah*, wherein we may see, both the upright man, and his security in evil times, described in very lively colours. *He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions; that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes; that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood; and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil: He shall dwell on high; his place of defence shall be the munitions*

[f] Psal. xxxvii. 6, 19, 24, 40, 41.

nitions of the rocks; his bread shall be given him, his water shall be sure. [g] The sense of which in short is this, that whoever walks uprightly, and makes a conscience of his ways; such a man shall be always under the watchful care and protection of the divine providence. And never will God suffer him to fall into any grievous distress; but he shall always have such a portion of the good things of this world afforded to him, as will be sufficient, not only to make his life supportable, but easy.

And, in truth, the experience of the world generally makes this good: Honest and upright men, for the most part, in the most public calamities, fare well; at least much better than those that are not so. In their greatest extremities, when they have no prospect of deliverance, from any human means, strange, extraordinary, unexpected succour and relief doth arrive to them. In a word, that care of the special providence of God attends them, that they are never miserable; however they may be now and then cut short of their outward fortunes.

But it must be acknowledged, that though piety and uprightness hath the promise of security in this life, and that promise, for the most part, and in general speaking, is made good; yet there are a great many exempt cases. God may see it fit, now and then, to suffer an upright man to be oppressed, and to perish in a common ruin; and this without any violation of his promises of this kind, which do indeed respect no more than the ordinary common events and successes of things. But yet even in this case, still there will *to the upright arise light in darkness*; that is, light in the

[g] Prov. xv. 16.

the third sense we have given of the word, viz. taking light for peace and joy, and comfort. And this is that which the Psalmist tells us in another place, *light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart* [h].

Whatever afflictions come upon the upright man, yet he hath this advantage of other men, that he bears them infinitely more lightly than they do: They are really no great disturbance to him; for he enjoys the same calmness and serenity of mind, the same peace, and quiet, and contentment that ever he did.

His present sufferings are rather matter of rejoicing, and triumph to him, than of discontent and repining; for he knows that they come upon him by the counsel and disposal of the great Governor of the world. And he knows that he hath so sincerely approved himself to God, and is so well beloved by him, that he should not have been ordered into these circumstances, had it not been really for his good. And this consideration doth so effectually support him under all the difficulties that he hath to conflict with, that he not only sits down easily and quietly, but is very well pleased with the dispensations of the divine Providence towards him, how ingrateful soever they may be to flesh and blood.

Let what will happen to him, he is full of peace and joy: For he hath met with no disappointment of his designs. His great aim was to please God; and his conscience from God's word assures him, that he has done it: and he hath nothing to do farther, but to wait for the happy time, when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, and every man's counsels and actions shall be made manifest, and then he doubts not to re-

[h] Psal. xcvii. 11.

ceive approbation and praise, and a great reward in that day of the Lord Jesus. And so much the rather, *because this light affliction, wherewith he is now exercised*, he is assured, *will work for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*[i].

To conclude, Whatever his sufferings be, he will live and die in a profound peace, perfectly satisfied with all God's dealings towards him: And his life and death will verify, to all that know him, that advice and observation of the Psalmist; *Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace*[k].

[i] 2 Cor. iv. 17. [k] Psal. xxxvii. 37.

SER-

SERMON VI.

A *ſtanding Revelation* of more Force to perſuade Men, than *one riſing from the dead.* With the evidence we have at this day for the truth of the Chriſtian Religion.

LUKE xvi. 31.

—— *If they hear not Moſes and the prophets, neither will they be perſuaded, though one roſe from the dead.*

THE parable of the rich man and Lazarus, in the goſpel, is ſo well known, that it is needleſs to relate the particulars of it. Theſe words are the concluſion of that parable, and they are made the words of Abraham, who being in paradiſe, is brought in as ſpeaking them to the rich man in hell.

The occaſion was this. This, now, poor man, not being able to obtain the leaſt comfort and refreſhment, for himſelf, under that unſupportable anguiſh he endured; bethinks himſelf of his friends and relations in the world, and caſts about how to prevent their com-

ing to that ſad condition. And for this purpoſe, he begs of Abraham, that he would be pleaſed to ſend the happy Lazarus into the world again, to teſtify to his brethren what he knew and had ſeen concerning the ſtate of the other life; and to exhort them to a timely repentance, leſt they ſhould come into that place of torment in which he was.

To this requeſt Abraham thus anſwers, *They had Moſes and the prophets*, which did plainly enough teſtify againſt their ſins, and offered ſufficient motives to them to repent: and therefore there was no need of ſuch extraordinary means as he deſired.

But this anſwer did not ſatisfy the miſerable man, ſtill he purſues his former requeſt: *Nay, father Abraham* (ſays he) *but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.* There was no reſiſting ſuch an argument as that. If Lazarus, whom they had all known, living, and now knew to be dead, ſhould ariſe again, and perſonally come to them, and tell them in what a ſad condition he had ſeen their friend, and that they muſt all expect to run the ſame fortune, if they did not change their courſe of living: This would come cloſe to them, and be more convincing than a hundred arguments drawn from the books of Moſes and the prophets, which were written many ages before their time, and ſo conſequently could not be preſumed to have ſo great a force as an argument drawn from their own ſenſe and experience.

To this reply of the rich man, Abraham peremptorily rejoins in the words of the text; *If they hear not Moſes and the prophets, neither will they be perſuaded, though one roſe from the dead.*

To omit leſſer matters that may be obſerved from theſe words, the point which primarily, and moſt naturally

turally seems to be offered to our consideration from them, is this; *That those who give no credit to a settled standing revelation of God once well attested, or are not thereby prevailed upon to reform their evil manners; neither in all probability would they be prevailed upon, though a particular miracle was wrought by God in order to their conversion; as, for instance, tho' one should rise from the dead, and appear to them.*

Now, to satisfy every one of the truth of this proposition, it will be abundantly sufficient to make out these two things:

First, That there is really more force and weight in a public standing revelation of God, such as that was by Moses and the prophets here mentioned, to convince men, or to reclaim them; than there can be in a private miracle, though I see it with my eyes.

And secondly, Though God should be pleased to work a miracle, or to send an apparition for the conviction of an obstinate unbeliever, or vicious person; yet such a one would as easily find out shifts and ways to evade the force of such an argument, and to hinder the effect it ought to have upon him, as he formerly did, to put off the ordinary standing motives and arguments of religion: and consequently, there is little probability, that he who is not gained by the former, will be wrought upon by the latter.

I begin with the first of these things: *That there is really more force and weight in a public standing revelation of God, to convince men, or to reclaim them; than there can be supposed to be in a private single miracle, though a man sees it with his eyes: or than there can be in an apparition from the dead, if God should think fit to vouchsafe such a thing.*

In ſpeaking to this, I mean not to concern myſelf or you, with the revelation of Moſes and the prophets, though that be the revelation which the text here ſpeaks of. I think it will be more ſuitable and uſeful to us, to conſider the propoſition with relation to chriſtianity, or the revelation of our Saviour and his apoſtles: That being the diſpenſation we are now under, and in which we are more immediately concerned.

Underſtanding, therefore, our propoſition of that eſpecial revelation, which we call the goſpel, two things there are to be offered, which will undeniably make it out:

Firſt, Thoſe perſons that lived in the times of our Saviour, when this public revelation of the goſpel was made and atteſted, had greater evidences and motives to bring them over to the belief and practice of his religion, than if any particular miracle had been wrought in order to their converſion.

Secondly, We at this day, all things conſidered, have as ſtrong arguments to convince us, as powerful motives to perſuade us, as thoſe that lived in the times of our Saviour, and were witneſſes of what he did and taught.

The unavoidable conſequences of which two points are theſe: That thoſe who lived in the time of our Saviour, and were not perſuaded by his goſpel, would not have been perſuaded, though one had been ſent to them from the dead. And thoſe that are now alive, and are not perſuaded by the evidences and motives of chriſtianity, which we now have among us, would not have been perſuaded, if they had lived in the times of our Saviour. So that in all ages of chriſtianity, the propoſition will hold true, That thoſe who give no credit

credit to the ſtanding revelation of the goſpel, or are not thereby induced to lead their lives according to it, would not be prevailed upon, though a particular miracle was wrought for their converſion.

Firſt then, *Our Saviour's goſpel, at the firſt publiſhing of it, was a more effectual means for the converſion of any man then living, than the ſending to him one from the dead.*

Let us ſuppoſe the parable we are now upon to be a true hiſtory, and that this rich man had five brethren living at Jeruſalem, at the time when our Saviour ſpoke it; and they were all wicked, lewd, atheiſtical perſons; and God Almighty, in pity to their ſouls, is pleaſed to grant that requeſt, which the rich man here makes to Abraham on their behalf; and accordingly ſends Lazarus from the dead to preach repentance to them: We cannot doubt, but ſuch a ſermon, from ſuch a man, and in ſuch circumſtances, would mightily awaken them, and put them upon a more ſerious conſideration of the folly of their ways, and the danger they expoſed them to, than ever they entered into before; and this conſideration it is likely might work them to ſerious reſolutions of quitting their preſent courſes, and entering upon a ſtricter life. Certainly ſuch an apparition as this, in reaſon, ſhould work ſuch effects; and, without doubt, upon many it would. But this we ſay, Whether did not our Saviour perform a great deal more than all this comes to, in order to the conviction and converſion of all about him? And whether had not theſe five brethren, ſuppoſing them to live when he preached his goſpel, and to be witneſſes of his actions, much more reaſon to be perſuaded by what he did, and taught, than by the aforeſaid viſion?

Our Saviour did, by all the ſigns and tokens in the world, evidence himſelf to be an expreſs meſſenger ſent from God, which they could not be certain that the viſion was.

The prophetic records of their own country did all teſtify of him; and they themſelves, by comparing his life and them together, might ſee they were fulfilled in him.

To omit the circumſtances of his birth, which were ſuch as never any beſides himſelf was born with: After he came to enter upon his public employment, God did more than once, by a voice from heaven, teſtify, that he had ſent him, and that all people were to hearken to him.

And the truth of this he himſelf confirmed, not only by his life, which was the moſt innocent, and virtuous, and godlike, that ever was: Not only by his ſermons, and doctrines, which were the moſt perfect and unexceptionable, and every way the moſt worthy of God, that ever were taught among men; but alſo and moſt chiefly, by his extraordinary works, which were ſuch, as none but God, or one acted by a divine power, could poſſibly perform.

He did the greateſt things that ever were ſeen by men. He ſhewed by his actions, and thoſe moſt publicly done, and frequently repeated, that he had an abſolute ſovereign power over the courſe of nature, over the inviſible agents of this world, as well angels as devils; and likewiſe over both the bodies and the ſouls of men.

And particularly to make it appear, that his teſtimony was more authentic, his authority more to be relied on, than that of any ghoſt, any Lazarus whatſoever, that ſhould riſe from the dead; it was very

uſual

usual with him to send again to the living those that were once dead. And one Lazarus he really brought again from the bosom of Abraham, after he had been four days dead, to testify to the world, that Jesus was the great embassador that God had sent, that all mankind were to receive and obey him.

And lest all this should not be convincing enough; lest it should be said still, One that should rise from the dead, and come and preach to us, would leave the great impressions upon us, Jesus himself did rise from the dead, and did come and preach to the world, and that in a far more convincing manner than the ghost of Lazarus would have done, if the rich man had had his own wish. For Jesus told his own death beforehand, and foretold also his resurrection: And if God meant not to lay an invincible temptation before mankind to believe a falshood, it had concerned his providence to have hindered this resurrection, if Jesus had been any thing else than what he pretended to be: But he did rise after three days, according to his prediction, and conversed upon earth with his followers for forty days together; shewing himself not only to a few particular disciples, but to great crowds of them, five hundred at a time; and after this, to the sight of his friends, he took his leave of the world, and ascended up into heaven. And for a testimony how God approved him there, he sent down the Holy Spirit upon his disciples, who, for many years together enabled them to do our Saviour's miracles over again, in confirmation of his doctrine.

If now, to come to our argument; if these five brethren of the rich man be supposed to be alive when all these things came to pass; if they had the opportunity of being present at many of these passages, and of

satisfying themselves of the rest (as certainly supposing the matter of fact to be true, none that lived at that time, and in that country, but had this opportunity:) If they heard this Jesus that was sent from God at the first, and that was sent from God the second time, after he was dead, testifying against their sins, forewarning them of the judgment to come, and assuring them of eternal rewards, if they would repent: I say, if they were witnesses of these things, I will appeal to all the world, whether they had not greater means of conviction offered to them, than if any ghost had appeared to them from the dead; or any particular miracle had been vouchsafed them for the bringing them over to virtue and sobriety.

But I believe nobody will much doubt of this; for indeed the matter will not bear a dispute. But here is the question; Whether we, that live at this distance from our Saviour, have the same means of conviction? And, whether one now appearing from the dead to us, would not be of greater force to persuade us, than the standing revelation of the gospel, as we have it now conveyed to us?

This therefore leads me to my second proposition upon this head, which, if it can be made out, will wholly take away all controversy in this matter. And it is this:

That we at this day have as great arguments to convince us of the truth of Christ's revelation, and consequently as great motives from thence to persuade us to reform our evil lives, as those that lived in the times of our Saviour.

It is true indeed, we want the evidence of sense in these matters, which they had; and upon that account it must be acknowledged, that they have the

advantage of us. But this we say, notwithstanding, that if we take all things together, and weigh them impartially, we shall find that that want is abundantly supplied to us in other respects.

For first of all, our Saviour's gospel, and all the evidences of it I have been now speaking of, were timely and faithfully recorded, and are as faithfully transmitted down to us. So that tho' we did not see or hear those things, yet we have a certain and exact account of them; and such an account as was never yet questioned by any adversaries that lived in those times, when such a question was most reasonably to be made; and such an account as appears, by all the evidences that a thing of that nature is capable of, to have been written by eye-witnesses, and such witnesses as were honest undesigning men; and not only so, but they sealed with their blood the truth of what they reported. And this same account was religiously received by all christians, in all places, without contradiction in those very times, and was shortly after translated into a multitude of languages; so that it is scarce possible it should in any considerable matter be corrupted. And from that time to this, in a continual succession, there have been men that have suffer'd martyrdom for the attestation of it; and in the first ages after Christ, when they had the best opportunities of examining the truth of these things, many thousands did so.

Now I say, though, according to the ordinary proverb, *seeing be believing:* Yet, next to seeing, an universal, well-grounded tradition, which hath visible effects attending it, hath the most force to gain belief. Nay, I do not know whether there be so much difference between the evidence of the one and the other, as one would think at first. Sure I am, there are many

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cases in which we do as firmly believe matters of fact upon the credit of tradition, and the permanent effects that do accompany it, as if we ourselves had been present, and seen them with our eyes. Which of us, for instance, doth make any more doubt of the story of *William* the conqueror his subduing this kingdom, or of Henry the eighth his casting off the Pope's supremacy, than he doth of the revolutions that have happened in his own time? And yet these matters of fact are no better attested than the history of our Saviour, and his miracles and his doctrines.

But secondly, Though those that lived in our Saviour's time had evidence of sense for the truth of what they believed concerning him and his doctrine which we have not; yet this is to be considered, that they laboured under far greater prejudices against his religion, than we now do; and consequently, all that sensible proof which they had of the truth of it, would not be more effectual for the convincing of them, than that proof we now have, though it be less, ought in reason to be for the convincing of us.

They that were the hearers and spectators of what our Saviour said and did, had mighty and inveterate prepossessions to struggle with. They were educated in a quite different religion, and so must be supposed to have entertained several notions and principles which would with great difficulty be rooted out; and, indeed for the effecting of it, there needed little less than an Almighty power. But it is not so with us; we by our education, are already disposed and prepared for the receiving christianity. We have no previous engagements to alienate our minds from it; nay, it is our interest to be of that religion, rather than any other. So that certainly a less evidence for the truth

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of it, will be as convincing to us, as a much greater would have been to those, to whom our Saviour first preached. Nay, I am very confident, that this thing being duly consider'd, it will appear, that our arguments for christianity drawn from tradition, will be more convincing to thinking men among us, than those arguments they had from sense and experience, could be to them.

But thirdly, If to what hath been said, we add the several arguments for the credibility of the christian religion, which we now have at this distance, that they had not, nor could have, that were our Saviour's immediate disciples; we shall be satisfied, that, in point of evidence, we have indeed much the advantage of them. We have now several standing proofs of our religion, which they could not have; and which are so strong and conclusive, that they do more than compensate for the want of that evidence of sense which they had, and we have not. I briefly instance in these three following:

First, The strange propagation and success of our religion throughout the world, and the means by which it was effected. That a poor despised crucified person should, in a few years, draw all the Roman empire after him; and that without any visible means, except the goodness of his cause, and the reasonableness of his doctrine, and the sincerity and constancy of his disciples, not in fighting for their master, but in laying down their lives for him; and this against all the power, and all the arts and stratagems that the devil or the princes of this world could invent to stifle and suppress his name: This is so strong an argument, that this cause was the cause of God, and that his providence was particularly concerned in the promoting of it, that

he must seem little to be sensible either of God or providence, that is not convinced by it.

If christianity had been of the same strain that the religion of Mahomet is, had been as well calculated for mens lusts and worldly interests as that is; had allowed as many sensual liberties to its disciples as that doth; and lastly, had been carried on in the world by the same ways and means that that hath been, that is, by the force of arms, and dint of the sword; it would have been no great wonder that it should have prevailed, as we see it hath done. But that a religion which had no worldly advantages to promise to its followers; nay, on the contrary, was so contrived, that none could own it, but he must at the same time deny all his temporal interests, quit his friends, his reputation, and all his fortunes in this world, and live in hourly expectation of a martyrdom; that such a religion as this should not only not die with the first broachers of it, but daily grow and spread; and the more it was persecuted, the more increase; till at last it so weathered out all opposition, that it got possession of the thrones of princes, and kings became nursing fathers to it: I say, whoever is not convinced, that the finger of God was in this, would scarce have been convinced, that the finger of God was in our Saviour's miracles, had he been alive and present when they were done. But this effect of christianity, both the prophets and our Lord long ago foretold, and this we now see was verified long ago, and is still verified in our days; though those that lived with our Saviour had no experience hereof, nor perhaps would several of them have been forward to believe it, though it had been told them. So that in this respect we have a most considerable argument for our religion, which they had not.

Secondly,

Secondly, This is not all, those that undertook the religion of our Saviour upon his preaching, had no experience of it: They were to be the first experimenters themselves. They ran a great risque, and ventured the sale of all that they had, and yet knew not so certainly what kind of treasure they should purchase. But we have the experience and suffrage of sixteen ages, which will all vouch, that what we lay out in this way will prove valuable treasure, will reward all the pains and all the expence we are at for the purchasing of it. We have never in the compass of our own knowledge, nor in all history, met with any who seriously laid out themselves in the service of Jesus Christ, and lived up to his religion, that ever grudged the pains they took about it, or repented themselves that they believed or practised as they did. The more any man has been a christian, still the more he hath thanked God for it, still the more quiet of mind and peace of conscience he hath possessed; the more he hath enjoyed himself, and the less he hath feared death, and all other outward calamities. If ever any christian hath repented of any thing, it is, that he hath not been christian enough, that he hath not so heartily believed in our Saviour, and obeyed his precepts, as he should have done. This we all know, and must be sensible of it; and it is a mighty evidence of the truth and goodness of the religion we profess. We now can try our religion, and give our approbation of it, by the same standard and measures, by which we try and approve of our customs and common laws. After long experience, we find the usefulness and the conveniency of it; and to put another in its place, would involve us in horrible mischiefs, and dangers, and perplexities. But this argument for christianity, those that were the

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firſt converts to it could not have; and therefore in this reſpect alſo we have the advantage of them.

Thirdly and laſtly, There is another very conſiderable ſtanding argument for the truth of the chriſtian revelation, which thoſe in our Saviour's time were uncapable of; and that is, the events, which he by the ſpirit of prophecy foretold, ſhould, after his death, come to paſs in the world; moſt of which have punctually happen'd as he predicted them, and the reſt in due time, we doubt not, will be accompliſhed. I have not leiſure to proſecute this argument particularly; only two things I cannot paſs by without mention, in both of which our Lord ſhewed himſelf as wonderful, and as true a prophet as ever appeared in the world.

The one is, the deſtruction of Jeruſalem and the temple, which he foretold with all the circumſtances imaginable, both as to time and manner. Now all that he ſaid concerning that deſtruction was punctually verified, even according to the accounts that the Jewiſh hiſtorian gives us of that matter. And when afterwards Julian the emperor, with a deſign to blaſt the credit of our Saviour's prophecy, reſolved to re-edify that temple, and ſet men on work for that purpoſe; he was ſoon forced to deſiſt from his enterprize, by earthquakes, and globes of fire iſſuing from out of the foundation: As the writers of that time, both chriſtian and pagan, do aſſure us.

The other inſtance I mention is, our Saviour's prophecy of the rejection of the Jews, and that they ſhould be *carried captive into all nations, till the times of the Gentiles were fulfilled.* Now this we ſee hath been accompliſhed for many ages, and ſtill continues to be ſo in our days. That nation of the Jews, who were once the peculiar people of God, ſettled in the land

land of Canaan, by his own immediate hand, are now dispersed all the world over, but no where incorporated into a nation. Yet, which indeed is wonderful, they continue Jews still; a people that mingle not with the rest of the world, and that are still as zealous for the scriptures, from whence we fetch the grounds of our christianity, as ever they were. So that they are a standing monument of God's vengeance upon a people for rejecting the gospel, and a standing testimony of the truth of our Saviour's prophecies.

These things now, with others, that I might name, are very considerable evidences of the truth of our religion, which those that were contemporary with our Saviour could not have. So that putting all these things together, I think we may safely draw our conclusion, viz. that we now have as great or greater arguments to convince us of the truth of Christ's revelation, as, or than they had who were witnesses of what he did and taught. And consequently those that are not persuaded now by the evidence of it, would not have been persuaded, though they had seen with their eyes, or heard with their ears, the publication of the gospel: Which is in effect to say, They would not have been persuaded, though one had risen from the dead.

But notwithstanding all this that I have said, it is to be feared, the thing will not easily go down with many of us; but still, with the rich man in the parable, after all that Abraham had said concerning Moses and the prophets, we will insist on our former notion: *Nay, but if one came to us from the dead, we should repent.* The motives that are offered to us in the gospel, are old and stale to us; we find by long experience, that they make no great impressions upon us: But

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if we were visited in such an extraordinary way as the rich man here desired for his brethren, we should then undoubtedly be prevailed upon. Thus I believe several of us think: But that we have little ground for such a fancy; nay, indeed if we were tried in this way, that it is ten to one, we should find ourselves mistaken; this may farther convince us, viz.

If God should indeed vouchsafe to work a miracle, or to send an apparition for the conviction of an obstinate unbeliever, or vicious person: Yet such a one would as easily find out shifts and ways to evade the force of such an argument, and to hinder the effects it ought to have upon him, as he formerly did, to put off the standing motives and arguments of religion. And consequently, there is little probability, that he who is deaf to Moses and the prophets, will be persuaded by one from the dead.

This is the second point I laid down for the proof of our Saviour's proposition; and I come now to speak to it.

I deny not indeed, but if an apparition should be made to a wicked person among us: If, for instance, one of our companions should, after he is dead, in a terrible manner come to any of us, and in a doleful tone and language, tell us how it goes with him in the other world; tell us, that there is indeed a God that judgeth the earth, that there is a heaven, that there is a hell, (all which things he, as well as we, made it our business to banish out of our minds as much as we could;) and acquaint us what an infinite unspeakable happiness he hath lost, by living loosly and carelesly as we now do; and that he is damned irrecoverably, and for ever damned, for that infidelity, and those lewd courses we shared with him in the guilt of, and

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do still continue to pursue; that all those revels we had together, all those pranks and debauches we were joint actors in, do now, as to him, end in insupportable anguish and pains, in the gnawing of a worm that never dies, and in a life of everlasting burnings; and that this shall certainly be our portion, as well as his, unless we do prevent it by a speedy reformation of our lives.

I say, if one of our friends should come from the dead, and tell us all this, there is no doubt but it would strike us with infinite horror and amazement. It would be the most confounding scene that ever our eyes beheld, the most awakening lecture that ever our ears heard, and such impressions it would in all likelihood make upon us, as would not suddenly be worn out.

But here is the point, Whether all this would be effectual for the working a perfect change of life, a lasting reformation upon a man that hath long resisted the ordinary means of conversion, and by long custom of sinning hath made a course of vice almost natural to him? We say, in all probability, it would not be effectual for the reforming such a man; because it would be so easy after the first heats which the vision occasioned were over, to find out colourable excuses and evasions, why he should not pursue a reformation, which his soul so much hated, and which his present interests and appetites were so much against.

For first of all, though he was never so sensibly smit at the first; yet after a little time, the infinite love he bears to that course of life, which this vision came to testify against, would put him upon inventions for the rendring the credit of his very senses doubtful and suspected. Many reasons would be suggested to him from his bribed understanding, why he

should

ſhould not in this caſe believe his own eyes. For why might not all this be a mere deluſion, the effects of a melancholy diſtempered fancy, a buſineſs wholly tranſacted on the ſtage of his imagination?

That he had ſuch an apparition, and that he was horribly frighted with it, he cannot doubt: but whether this apparition was really preſented to his outward ſenſes, and was not only the fiction of his own heated and diſturbed brain, he thinks he hath reaſon to doubt.

For he remembers, that even in dreams, things have been as lively repreſented to him, and made as great impreſſions on him, as the ſame things could have been or done if he had been awake: and he knows very well, that fancy hath a ſtrange power over a man's judgment, even when his eyes are wide open; eſpecially, if the circumſtances of being alone, of melancholy and penſiveneſs, and ſome particular accidents, do concur to the raiſing of it.

How many people meet with goblins in their night-walks, and ſee armies fighting in the air, and aſſuredly perſuade themſelves and others that they do ſo? When as, in truth, the one is nothing elſe but trees; and the other but clouds formed into ſuch ſhapes by the power of their imagination. How many perſons, in feveriſh diſtempers, ſee plainly fiends and devils ſtanding at their bed's-feet, ready to take them away, and hear dreadful noiſes? But yet none is ſo ſimple as to believe theſe to be realities, but only the effects of their preſent frenzy. And why may not this bug-bear of a viſion, that did at firſt ſo fright the man, be a thing of the ſame kind, a mere creature of his own diſorder'd fancy?

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It is certainly not impossible for a man, whose concernment it is not to believe any thing of this nature, at last to bring himself to such an opinion.

Especially when he is helped forward by the concurrent votes of all his jolly companions, whom he tells the thing to; who, to be sure, will not fail to laugh heartily, and make very merry with his story; and, if it be possible, to droll it out of his head, by persuading him, that the whole matter was but the result of melancholy and a crazed brain; and that if he still continues to believe it, he is fitter for Bedlam than their company.

But secondly, Supposing he cannot thus easily baffle the credit of his senses; but is forced to believe, that what he saw and heard was more than a fancy or imagination; yet that inveterate principle of vice within him, will put him upon other ways and contrivances for the hindering that effect, which the vision ought in reason to have upon him. Though he cannot question the truth of the matter of fact, yet it is likely he may question the force of the argument drawn from thence for his conviction.

Here is one pretends to come to him from the dead; but how shall he be certain that he did really come from thence? For any thing he knows, it may be some trick put upon him. Some knavish fellow had a mind to fright him, or some bigotted religionist, assuming the person of a ghost, thought by this pious fraud to convert him to his persuasion; as he hath read in story such pranks have been play'd to serve a turn, or promote a good cause. And whereas his reason might tell him, that this could not be so, seeing the person that appeared to him, had both the countenance and the voice of his friend, yet that he would

would get over; the impoſture was cunningly carried on, and the ſurprize and fright it put him into, did ſo diſorder his judgment, that he was not able to diſtinguiſh between the true and the counterfeit.

But ſuppoſing he be convinced, that here was no juggle in the matter, but what appeared was a true ſpirit or a ghoſt, if there be any ſuch: yet how ſhall he know that it was the ghoſt of his friend? If he was ſure it was he, he would give credit to what he reported, becauſe of the former experience he had had of his integrity: But this he cannot any way be certain of. For any thing he knows to the contrary, it may be one of thoſe ill-natur'd inhabitants of the air, that are ſo much talked of, that make it their buſineſs to diſturb the reſt and quiet of mankind; and take a pleaſure in filling their heads with fears and ſcruples, and drawing them to all kind of ſuperſtition.

He hath heard and read of ſuch: And there is no man of any perſuaſion or religion, jew, turk, or heathen; nay, all the ſeveral ſorts of heathens at this day, which are to be found either in the Eaſt or Weſt-Indies; and chriſtians too of all communions, there is none of theſe but have ſtories to tell of apparitions and viſions, for the confirmation of their ſeveral doctrines and tenets. Now that all theſe apparitions are to have credit given to them, is abſurd; becauſe they contradict one another in their diſcoveries. How, therefore, can he tell whether this particular apparition that is made to him ought to be credited or no, as to what it declares concerning religion, and the ſtate of the other world? In plain Engliſh, rather than ſuch a man as we are ſpeaking of, will be prevailed upon to quit his dearly beloved luſts and vices, he will find excuſes and reaſons a great many, why he ought

ought not to believe any thing that is conveyed to him in such a manner, as we now suppose.

Especially, if we consider, in the third place, what advantages he will make for his purpose, from that very way, that we now think would be most effectual to convert him; that is, one coming from the dead. Here is an apparition pretends to be sent upon a particular message to him from the other world, to persuade him to embrace such a religion, and change his way of living; and threatens him with horrible punishments, if he doth not: The very unusualness of the thing will put some apprehensions into him, (especially considering his concernment to find out all the ways that can be, to elude the force of the argument) that it is not so convincing, doth not carry in it so great evidence, as at first sight there seemed to appear. For what imaginable reason can be given why he should be dealt with in a way so different from that, that the rest of mankind are? The particularity of the miracle will give occasion to him, to suspect the truth of what it discovers. If his neighbours and friends were thus haunted, he might think he had reason to be alarmed, and to apprehend some danger in that course of life he is so much dissuaded from: But since none in the place where he lives, is thus exercised besides himself, he cannot satisfy his reason as to this way of proceeding with him. If this means of conviction was rational and strong, without doubt others would have it afforded to them; and be convinced by it as well as he: But since no such thing appears, as the apparition itself is unaccountable, so are the arguments and motives it offers, unaccountable also. And, till he be convinced in the same way, and by the same reasons that other men are, he will continue as he is.

I repreſent theſe things, not to ſhew the weakneſs or invalidity of ſuch an argument as we are ſpeaking of, but to ſhew how eaſily thoſe that have eſpouſed intereſts inconſiſtent with religion and chriſtianity, may find out expedients for the avoiding the force of it.

But, fourthly and laſtly, Let all this go for nothing. Let us ſuppoſe the man to be very well ſatisfied in his own mind, both concerning the matter of fact, and the cogency of the argument he hath from thence, to live after another rate than he hath hitherto done: Nay, as often as he thinks of this viſion, or is aſked concerning it, he hath the ſame ſenſe, and makes the ſame judgment of it that he did at firſt; though it be many years after: I ſay, ſuppoſing all this, yet doth it from hence follow, that ſuch a man will be effectually brought over to virtue and religion, after he hath long purſued a courſe of ſin, and reſiſted the arguments of the goſpel? Alas! it is very unlikely. How much alarmed ſoever he was at firſt, yet it is a hundred to one (if he be ſuch a perſon as we ſpeak of) but in time, and by degrees, the impreſſions will wear off, and nature return to its firſt courſe. It was the newneſs and ſurprizingneſs of the thing that firſt wrought upon him; but that will not laſt always. After he hath once got over the firſt tranſports, and is come again to his uſual temper, and to his buſineſs, and to his company; the argument, though it have the ſame force that it had at firſt, yet it grows flat and unaffecting, and will have no more effect upon him than the ſtanding motives of chriſtianity formerly had. Notwithſtanding all his firſt convictions, he will live as tamely under the bondage and tyranny of his old reigning luſt (though, perhaps, not without ſome checks of conſcience now and then) as thoſe that never

ver had such kind of means vouchsafed them, for their conversion.

And it must needs be thus; for when all is done, arguments will still be but arguments. They can persuade, but they cannot compel. The efficacy of them doth in a great measure depend upon our will and choice, especially where they are to combat with strong passions and prepossessions.

Are there not a thousand persons in our days, that are as fully convinced of the truth of the christian revelation, and the necessity of a holy religious life in order to the going to heaven, or avoiding the pains of hell, as they would be if one should come to them from the dead? Nay, more fully, perhaps, than they would have been by the testimony of such an apparition, had they wanted the scriptures. And have not the consciences of these persons, at several times, by several means, been severely awakened? And have they not at these seasons, in the most serious manner imaginable, made vows and resolutions to live a holy christian life? And yet we see they continue still unreformed, still they are the same sensual, careless, unchristian livers that ever they were. I appeal to the consciences of men, whether this be not true; and why should we think it would fare otherwise with us, if God should send one from the dead to reclaim us? That very miracle would not convince our understandings more than they have been convinced already; and, therefore, why should we think it would work more upon our wills?

The sum of all this discourse is this; That how prevailing soever we may imagine such an experiment, as the rich man here offers to Abraham for the conversion of his brethren, would be upon us; yet a sen-

ſual man, that was unwilling to give up himſelf to the conduct of religion, might eaſily find out ways to avoid the force that it ought to have upon his mind; nay, more eaſily, perhaps, than he hath hitherto reſiſted the motives of the goſpel. And therefore, we may certainly conclude with Abraham in the text, that they *that hear not Moſes and the prophets*; or, to put it into our own language, they that hear not Chriſt and his apoſtles, *neither*, in all probability, *would they be perſuaded, tho' one roſe from the dead.*

Nothing now remains, but that I draw two or three inferences from what hath been ſaid, and ſo conclude.

In the firſt place, From what I have diſcourſed upon this argument, we may diſcover the infinite wiſdom of God, in the pitching upon that method he hath done for the bringing men to virtue and happineſs; namely, by the ſtanding revelations of Moſes and the prophets, and of Chriſt and his apoſtles: For we may perceive this method is every way more accommodated for that end, than if God ſhould be every day working miracles for the reclaiming particular perſons.

As it is more ſuitable to the other methods of God's providence; to the way that he hath choſen for the government of the world (which is by the ſettled ſtanding laws of motion, leaving natural cauſes to produce their natural effects, and not interpoſing his omnipotency, but upon eſpecial extraordinary occaſions:) So alſo, as we have ſeen, it is much more effectual for the convincing mens underſtandings, and the working upon their wills, than the other method of private miracles and revelations would be.

We have ſeen how many ways the force of an argument drawn from one's appearance from the dead may be evaded: But now none of theſe pretences can be

be made against the evidence of a public revelation, so attested and confirmed, and conveyed down to us, as that of christianity is. And besides, there are many arguments to be drawn from such a revelation, to shew the credibility of it, which are altogether wanting to such a private miracle as we speak of.

Secondly, We may learn from hence, what little need there is of any new modern miracles for the confirming to us any doctrine of christianity, which was long ago, in all the articles of it, so well attested by the illustrious miracles of Christ and his apostles.

And more especially we may learn from hence, what little credit is to be given to those miracles, that are wrought, or pretended to be wrought, for the proof of such doctrines, as are really contrary to that revelation of our Lord, as it is delivered in the holy scriptures.

We are sure that Moses and the prophets, Christ and his apostles, taught nothing but the truth of God, he having so publickly and so convincingly set his seal to all their doctrines. And we are sure likewise, that the scripture contains nothing in it, but what was taught by them, and consequently must be the truth of God also. And, therefore, if any doctrine or article of religion be at any time recommended to our belief, that doth not agree with these holy writings, or doth contradict them either directly, or by plain unavoidable consequence; we may be equally sure, that that doctrine cannot be true, nor is to be received by us, though we are told of never so many private miracles that have been wrought for the confirmation of it.

Our rule in these cases is, To the law and to the testimony; to the public and undoubted oracles of God in the Old and New-testament. Whatever doc-

trine can be proved out of them, we are bound to embrace it without a new miracle. On the other side, whatever doctrine is inconsistent with them, we must reject it, tho' an angel from heaven, or one from the dead, should come and preach it to us.

Thirdly, From hence we see the vanity and unreasonableness of those men, that, not content with the ordinary means of grace, are always wishing for extraordinaries. There are a great many of us, that will be saved by methods of our own chusing, otherwise we will not be saved at all. As it was in St. Paul's time, the Jews they required a sign; the Greeks they were for wisdom and philosophy; and perhaps a third sort of men were for another kind of means of conviction: So it is among us.

Here is one man would have a particular miracle wrought for his conversion. If he could see a spirit or a ghost, he would believe there was another world. If God would send an angel from heaven to preach to him, he thinks he should become a new man.

Here is another would believe the gospel, if every point of it could be demonstrated by reason, and a clear and plain account be given of all the mysteries of it: But till that be done, he is of the religion of the philosophers.

Here is another man waits for immediate impulses and inspirations. The ordinary assistances of the Spirit, that accompany the word and sacraments, will not do his business.

But let us not deceive ourselves. All these imaginations are vain and foolish. If God should grant us our several desires; and give one of us a sign, another of us a demonstration, another of us a powerful conviction upon our minds from his Holy Spirit, and that

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in an extraordinary way; yet it is still very doubtful, whether, for all this, the business of our conversion would be effected.

None was more confident than the rich man in the parable, that if to the testimony of Moses and the prophets, was super-added a new miracle, his brethren would certainly be persuaded: But yet, you see, our Saviour affirms the direct contrary.

Oh, let us all close with the standing public methods which God hath established in the church, for the bringing us to virtue and eternal happiness, and not be hankering after new and fanciful ways of our own chusing. Most certainly, the ordinary means of grace are sufficient for the salvation of all our souls, and will be effectual to that end, if we be not wanting to ourselves. And if any extraordinaries be at any time needful, God, without doubt, will supply us with them also.

Fourthly and lastly, From what hath been said, we see the horrible guilt, and the utter inexcusableness of those men, that notwithstanding the gospel means of salvation, that have been so long afforded them, do still continue infidels in their judgment, or immoral in their lives.

What will these men be able to say for themselves, when they come to appear before the judge of the world, at the great day of accounts? Will they pretend there was not force enough in the gospel-evidence, to convince them; or weight enough in its motives to reclaim them? Ah, their own hearts will give them the lye. They can no longer be able to deceive themselves. There will be no unbelievers, no feared consciences, in the other state. They will then be clearly convinced, that God, for his part, did all that was necessary; nay all that was fit to be done, in order

to their salvation: But they were resolved to shut their eyes, and harden their hearts against the gracious means that were tender'd them.

Oh, how will the rich man, and his five brethren in hell, rise up in judgment against these men? For they only refused to hear Moses and the prophets: But these, besides them, have obstinately refused to hear Christ and his apostles, who brought abundantly greater light into the world, than the former did.

Much more, How will the poor ignorant heathens rise up in judgment against them, who were destitute both of Moses and Christ? And yet, to the shame of christians it may be spoken, have several of them lived better lives than many of us do.

May we not justly and sadly apply that woe which our Saviour pronounced of Chorazin and Bethsaida, to thousands among us? Woe unto you, unbelievers, woe unto you, O obstinate and irreclaimable sinners; for if the mighty means of grace, the mighty evidence of truth, had been afforded to Tyre and Sydon, to Sodom and Gomorrah, to mahometans and pagans, that have been offered unto you, *they would long ago have repented in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for all these in the day of judgment, than for you.*

God Almighty give us all grace seriously to consider these things, that we may, by a timely and hearty closing with his methods and designs for our salvation, prevent the dismal consequences of infidelity and a vicious life; that so it may not be our condemnation at the last day, That light is come into the world, and we have loved darkness rather than light.

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SERMON VII.

Rules for the conduct of ourselves, where we are at a loss to distinguish the Bounds of *Duty* and *Sin*; *Lawful* and *Unlawful* in any action.

GALAT. v. 13.

Use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh.

ANY one that useth to make reflections upon his own actions, cannot but observe, That one of the great occasions of the sins he is guilty of in the course of his life, is the too free use of his lawful liberty.

I do not say, that any man doth commit sin by using his lawful liberty (for that would be a kind of contradiction:) But, I say, the using our liberty to the utmost pitch and extent of that which we call lawful, is the occasion of a great many sins that would otherwise not have been committed.

If one should offer to tempt a man that hath any sense of virtue or religion, to do a thing, that at the first sight appears sinful or wicked; it would certainly be

be rejected. Every one that has any regard to God or goodneſs would ſtart at ſuch a propoſal. But here is our infelicity: a temptation comes on by degrees. And at the firſt we are engaged in nothing but what is lawful and honeſt; and accordingly we uſe that liberty which nature and religion allow us; and ſo we proceed on inſenſibly in the uſe of that liberty, till at laſt, we become uncertain whether we have not exceeded the bounds of what is lawful: And by this means we are often caught. Nay, indeed, nothing but this could betray well-meaning perſons, and ſuch as are virtuouſly diſpoſed, into ſin. *Licitis perimus omnes*, ſaid a devout man: It is by lawful things that we commonly miſcarry.

With great reaſon therefore doth St. Paul give this advice in the text: *Brethren* (ſaith he) *ye have been called unto liberty; only uſe not liberty for an occaſion to the fleſh.*

There is no doubt, but the apoſtle writ theſe words upon occaſion of, and with reference to, the great controverſy that was then on foot among chriſtians, touching the obligation of the jewiſh law.

Some, then, thought themſelves bound in conſcience to obſerve all the precepts of Moſes his law. Other chriſtians thought they were freed by the coming of Chriſt, from all legal obſervances. The apoſtle determines the caſe in favour of theſe latter, and declares, That by the goſpel they were called unto liberty, and were freed from all the moſaical impoſitions. But yet, nevertheleſs, he tells them, they ought to be careful in the exerciſe of that liberty, that they *do not uſe it for an occaſion to the fleſh.*

That is to ſay, that this liberty, to which they were called, ſhould not miniſter to any ſin, That they

they ſhould not ſo uſe it, as to be a ſnare, either to themſelves or others. To themſelves, by running into licentiouſneſs, and taking unlawful liberties. To others, either by affrighting the unbelieving Jews, from the embracing chriſtianity, or diſcouraging thoſe that already believe the goſpel, in the profeſſion of it.

This is the ſtrict ſenſe of the apoſtle's words, as they come in here in the text, and as they do relate to that occaſion upon which he writ them. But that ſenſe, with reference to that occaſion, is now out of doors among us: Though the general advice that is here given, will eternally be good and uſeful; nay, and always needful to be inſiſted on in all ages of the world.

We have none now, that uſe their liberty for an occaſion to the fleſh, as to the point of the judaical ceremonies. But we have abundance that do uſe it ſo as to other matters. Nay, as I ſaid before, this too free uſe of our liberty in lawful things, is one of the greateſt ſources and fountains from whence moſt of our irregularities do proceed. And, therefore, I do not know how I can entertain you more uſefully upon this text, than by endeavouring to give you the beſt rules I can, for the reducing the apoſtle's exhortation into practice, as it doth concern us at this day.

But that you may ſee plainly what I drive at, I will yet ſtate the matter a little more particularly.

Our caſe in this world, is this; The laws of virtue and religion do allow men all reaſonable liberties in the gratification of their natural paſſions and appetites, and in the uſe and enjoyment of all the good things of this life. But all unreaſonable gratifications, all exceſſes and immoderate liberties are forbidden by religion, and therefore are ſinful and criminal.

If now in all cases a man could readily and certainly fix the precise bounds and land-marks of what is reasonable and moderate, and what is unreasonable and excessive in the use of his liberty; so as that upon all occasions, and in all emergencies, he could say within his own mind, Thus far I may lawfully and innocently go in the gratification of such an appetite, or in the enjoyment of such a pleasure, or the like; but if I proceed a step farther, I become a transgressor: I say, if this was the case of a man, in the use of his liberty, it would be no hard matter for any well-disposed person to take all that liberty that was moderate and lawful, and to forbear all that which is excessive and unlawful.

But now this is not always an easy matter to be done. For many cases happen, in which a man cannot precisely determine where it is that his lawful liberty ends, and where it is that it begins to be extravagant and excessive. So that while a man is only designing to gratify his desires in lawful instances, he is often carried beyond his bounds, and proceeds to excess.

This now, I say, is one great occasion of sin to mankind; and yet there is no avoiding of it, because it is such a one as doth necessarily arise from the nature of things.

Thus for instance: It is certainly very lawful for a man to drink wine and strong drink, not only for his health's sake, when his constitution doth require it; but also for chearfulness, and the enjoyment of his friends. But, on the other side, drunkenness and intemperance are grievous crimes, and utterly forbid by our religion. Whilst now a man on one hand, hath a desire to take that liberty that is allowed him,

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and to gratify his natural inclination to mirth and pleaſantneſs, or to ſhew civility, as he terms it, to his company; and on the other hand, he has no certain unalterable meaſures to proceed by, for the ſtinting himſelf in this caſe; (as ſurely it is a very hard matter to preſcribe or define, either to a man's ſelf or others, the exact pitch or limits where temperance ends, and intemperance begins:) by this means, I ſay, he is often betrayed into ſin. Thinking with himſelf, that there is a great latitude and compaſs in the exerciſe of temperance and ſobriety (as indeed there is) and that therefore he may go on ſome time longer with the company; the wine by this means ſteals upon him, and he is, before he was aware, fallen into the ſin of intemperance and exceſs.

And thus it is, not only as to the uſe of our liberty, in things allowed, but as to the performance of our duty in things commanded.

Every man is ſenſible, that it is a principal law of our religion to be charitable, and to give alms out of our ſubſtance. But now it is not ſo eaſy a matter for any man to define, and ſet out the *quantum*, or the preciſe proportion of alms, which every one is bound to give; ſo as to be able to pronounce, that if a man gives ſo much, he performs his duty, and is a charitable man, for one in his circumſtances; but if he gives leſs than that, he is covetous and uncharitable. Now I ſay, becauſe this duty of charity is thus indefinitely left, and there is ſuch an affinity and undiſtinguiſhableneſs between the leaſt meaſures of charity, and the ſin of being uncharitable; men do from hence often take occaſion to fall ſhort in the performance of it. And as in the former inſtance I gave about drinking, they are apt to take more liberty than is allowed them,

ſo in this, they are apt to do leſs than is commanded them. For if they do but give ſomething to the poor out of their yearly income, they think they give enough to ſatisfy the command of charity; and ſo they make no conſcience of ſaving and hoarding without end, or without meaſure.

There are a hundred more inſtances beſides theſe two that I have named, wherein there is ſuch a latitude left to our practices, and the difference between lawful and unlawful, duty and ſin, lies in ſo ſmall a compaſs, that it is hard to ſeparate and diſtinguiſh them, unleſs a man be both very wiſe and very honeſt.

We have not any law of God, which defines how often we are to pray; or when it is our duty to faſt; or to what degree we may be angry; or how we are to govern ourſelves, as to the quantity or kinds of our meat and drink; or how far we may comply with the cuſtoms of the world; or how ſplendid we may be in our apparel and equipage; or what games and recreations may be uſed, and how often; or what rules we are to go by in buying and ſelling, and our other dealings with men; or how far we may ſeek our own, when our right cannot be obtained, without prejudice to our neighbour.

In theſe, I ſay, and abundance of other caſes, we have no expreſs particular laws of God to ſteer and meaſure our actions by; nor indeed is it poſſible we ſhould have: Becauſe what is fit and reaſonable to be done in theſe caſes, admits of ſo great a difference, from the infinite variety of the circumſtances of particular men.

What now muſt we do in theſe caſes? How muſt we order ourſelves, that we may perform our duty, and keep out of ſin?

Why,

Why, in anſwer to this, I ſay, we have only general rules to direct us in theſe matters; and thoſe rules we are to apply to our own particular caſes.

In this latitude that things are left in, we are to uſe our liberty as carefully and as prudently as is poſſible; taking our meaſures from the principles of reaſon, and the general rules of the goſpel. Now what thoſe general rules and meaſures are, it is my buſineſs at this time to treat of.

And three things I have here to propoſe for the uſe of our liberty, which will, I think, be a ſufficient direction to us in all caſes of this nature; and which, if we do carefully obſerve, we ſhall never *uſe our liberty for an occaſion to the fleſh*; but we ſhall both come up to what is our duty, and ſhall likewiſe avoid all thoſe ſins which mankind are ſo frequently betrayed into, through the too great affinity that there is between virtue and vice, and the indiſcreet exerciſe of their liberty upon occaſion thereof.

And the firſt thing I would poſſeſs you all with, and which indeed, as it is the moſt general, ſo it is the beſt advice that can be given in this matter, is this; That we would endeavour to be heartily honeſt and ſerious in the buſineſs of religion: That we would ſincerely devote ourſelves to the ſervice of God: That we would purify our minds as much as may be, from all ſenſual and ſelfiſh principles; and in all our actions and purſuits have more reſpect to the doing our duty, and the approving ourſelves to our great Lord and maſter, than to any other conſideration.

This is that which St. Paul ſo often exhorts us to. *Whether* (ſaith he) *you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* And again, *Whatever ye do, do it heartily, as unto the Lord, knowing that*

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of the Lord you ſhall receive the reward of the inheritance.

If we could once get ourſelves poſſeſſed of this probity, this purity of mind and heart, it would better inſtruct us in the uſe of our liberty, and teach us to diſtinguiſh between good and evil; what is fit to be done, and what ought not to be done, in all caſes and emergencies we are concerned in; than all the dry rules of caſuiſtical learning, be they never ſo carefully and accurately laid down.

When a man is once arrived to that holy temper of mind, that he heartily loves God and his neighbour, and has ſuch a lively ſenſe of the truth, and the excellency of Chriſt's religion; that he is reſolved, that that ſhall influence and govern the whole courſe of his life, and that he will do all his actions, as much as he can, for the honour of our Lord, and the advancement of his ſervice in the world; there can hardly any particular caſe occur to ſuch a man in which he will not have rules and meaſures ready at hand to ſteer and direct him in his proceedings.

Nay, this general principle alone, of doing all his actions to the glory of God; that is to ſay, to the honour of his religion, and the edification of his neighbour: I ſay, this alone will afford him ſufficient light and direction for the government of his actions in all contingencies. Becauſe there is no action he can be engaged in, but it is at the firſt ſight diſcernable whether the doing of it, or the not doing of it, doth more tend to the honour of his religion, or the good of others.

That which makes the conduct of a man's ſelf in this world, ſo nice and difficult a matter, and has given occaſion to the diſcuſſion of ſo many caſes of conſcience,

ſcience, about the lawfulneſs or unlawfulneſs of actions, is this; That men are not thoroughly honeſt, but halt between God and the world. They have a great mind to ſerve their pleaſure and their ambition, and their ſecular ends, and yet to ſerve God too; and this puts them upon tampering and trying to reconcile theſe intereſts together.

Whence it comes to paſs, that the uſual queſtions that ariſe about their actions, are not, what is beſt to be done, or what is moſt agreeable to their duty, in this or the other caſe? But, how far they may go in the gratification of ſuch an appetite or paſſion, without tranſgreſſing the laws of God? How far they may ſatisfy their covetous deſires, without being unjuſt? Whether they may uſe ſuch arts or tricks, in getting or ſaving, without being knaviſh? How far they may drink, and not be drunk? How far they may gratify their humour of decking and adorning themſelves, and yet do no unlawful thing? How far they may indulge wantonneſs, and yet be chaſte?

Now, as I ſaid before, ſuch queſtions as theſe are not eaſy to be reſolved (nor indeed is the goſpel of Chriſt ſo contrived, as if it had taken much care whether they were reſolved, or no). But they are really caſes and problems that require both judgment and learning, and likewiſe the conſideration of abundance of particular circumſtances, to have a good account given of them.

But now the man that doth entirely give up himſelf to the conduct of the Spirit, and propoſeth nothing to himſelf in all his actions but the pure glory of God; ſuch a man having none of theſe worldly ſenſual deſigns to ſerve in his actions, can rarely be ſuppoſed to have any of theſe queſtions to put to himſelf: And

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consequently he can never be at a loss or uncertainty how he is to act, for want of a resolution of them; much less can he be in danger of transgressing the bounds that God hath fixed to his actions.

All the point that such a one hath to consider in any action is, whether will his doing or not doing such an action, better serve the ends of religion? Which will tend most to his own spiritual benefit, and the profit of his neighbour, to pursue this design, or to let it alone? Whether will be more conducive to the honour of his Lord, to gratify such an appetite, or to deny it satisfaction?

This, I say, is the only question that such a man has to put to himself, and there is no difficulty in giving an answer to it. For there is scarce any case to be put concerning an action, but it is very obvious, without an instructor, to find out which side of the case, if it be chosen, will most minister to the ends of virtue and religion and charity. Or, if it be not obvious, then it is very certain, the man needs not much deliberate about it, but may chuse either side indifferently.

It is a very hard matter oftentimes to determine, concerning the necessity and obligation of actions; that is, whether a man be bound to do them, or no. It is likewise often a hard matter to determine concerning the lawfulness of actions, whether a man may do them, or no. But it is a very easy matter in most cases, to determine concerning the expedience of actions; that is to say, whether it be best and fittest for a man to do them, or no. Now this last, I say, is the point that a thoroughly good man will consider, and steer himself by in all his actions.

Thus

Thus for inſtance, It may perhaps bear a diſpute, whether a man be preciſely bound by God's law, to pray ſolemnly twice a day, ſo as that he ſins if he do not: But it will bear no diſpute, that it is much better and more acceptable to God, and beneficial to ourſelves, to pray at leaſt thus often, than to pray ſeldomer. And therefore ſuch a perſon as I am ſpeaking of, will, upon this conſideration, put it in practice, (nay, and pray oftner too, as he has occaſion) without concerning himſelf, whether he be ſtrictly bound ſo to do, or no.

It may bear a diſpute among ſome perſons, whether painting the face be not allowable to chriſtian women. But it can bear no diſpute among any, that it is more agreeable to the ſobriety and modeſty, and chaſtity of a diſciple of Jeſus Chriſt, and better ſerves the ends of religion, to forbear all ſuch ſuſpicious ornaments, (there being rarely any good end to be ſerved by them, but abundance of evil often ariſing from them). Now this conſideration alone is enough to ſet the heart of every ſerious chriſtian againſt thoſe practices, and to make them wholly to refrain them.

Thus again, it is argued both ways about play or gaming, whether it be lawful or no: (eſpecially when ſums of money are played for; and the thing becomes rather an avaritious contention, than a recreation and divertiſement) ſome believing that it is innocent; others that is a grievous ſin. But there is no man, even of thoſe that uſe it moſt, but will readily acknowledge, that it expoſeth a man to great and dangerous temptations of ſundry kinds; that it is the occaſion of abundance of ſin, and abundance of miſchief, and that it ſeldom fails to produce intolerable conſequences, both as to mens ſouls, and eſtates, and families. Now to a

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man that loves God, and has a tender sense of his duty, this is enough in all conscience to deter him for ever from the practice of gaming, though it be not made to appear to him, that it is expressly and explicitly forbid by any law of Jesus Christ.

So that you see, that in those points where there are disputes on both sides, when the consideration is concerning the obligation, or the lawfulness of an action; there is no difficulty, no dispute at all, when the consideration is only concerning what is best and most fitting to be done; concerning what is most agreeable to our duty, and most conducive to the honour of God and religion, as to that action: That is evident enough in all cases; nor is any man at a loss for finding it out. And that is the principle which I say, every sincere lover of God governs himself by; and which I would have us all to propose to ourselves for the rule of our actions, in order to the securing us from those snares and stumbling-blocks, to which the affinity between virtue and vice, lawful and unlawful, will otherwise expose us.

Let us not stand upon points with God Almighty, as if so much was his, and so much was our own; as if we were to share ourselves between his service and our own pleasures and profits, and the like; and were resolved not to pay him any more respect or love, than what some express letter of his law doth exact at our hands. But let us so entirely devote ourselves to his service, as to do not only all those things which we are strictly bound to do, or else we are transgressors; but all those things that are acceptable to him, all those things that are praise-worthy, and tend to the perfection of our nature, and the reputation of Christ's religion.

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Let us make it the end of our actions, not to ſeek our own, but his glory; every day to grow better and better, and in every occurrence to conſider, not what may lawfully be done, but what is moſt becoming a diſciple of Jeſus Chriſt to do. In a word, whatever is beſt in any action; whatever moſt ſerves the end of piety; whatever tends moſt to the credit of our religion, and the benefit of others, let us conſider that, and act accordingly.

And I am ſure thus to deſign and act, is moſt ſuitable to the nature and genius of our chriſtian religion; nay, indeed it is the principal law and commandment of it.

The deſign of chriſtianity is not to adjuſt the preciſe bounds of virtue and vice, lawful and unlawful, which is that that a great many among us ſo greedily hanker after. For the beſt that could have come from ſuch a deſign had been only this, that men, by this means, might have been fairly inſtructed, how they might have avoided the being bad, tho' they never became very good. But the deſign of chriſtianity, is to make men as good as they can poſſibly be; as devout, as humble, as charitable, as temperate, as contented, as heavenly-minded, as their natures will allow of in this world. And for the producing this effect, the exact diſtinguiſhing the limits of the ſeveral virtues, and their oppoſite vices ſignifies very little.

The laws of our great maſter are not like the civil municipal laws of kingdoms, which are therefore wonderful nice, and critical, and particular in ſetting bounds to the practices of men, becauſe they only look at overt-actions: ſo that if a man do but keep his actions within the compaſs of the letter of the law, he

he may be accounted a good subject, and is no way obnoxious to the penalties which the law threatens.

If our religion had been of this strain, we should, without doubt, have had a world of particular laws and precepts, and directions about our actions, in all emergent cases, more than we now have: And we might as easily have known from the Bible, what was forbidden unlawful anger, what was excessive drinking, what was pride and luxury in apparel, and the like; as we now know by the statute-book, what is burglary, or murther, or treason. But there was no need of these particularities in the institution of Christ Jesus. His religion was to be a spiritual thing. And the design of it was not to make us chaste, or temperate, or humble, or charitable, in such a degree; but to make us as chaste and temperate, as humble and charitable, as pure and holy in all our conversation, as we possibly can be.

This, I say, was the design of Christ's religion. It was to be the highest philosophy that was ever taught to mankind. It was to make us the most excellent and perfect creatures, as to purity of mind and heart, that human nature is capable of. And therefore it hath not been so accurate and particular in prescribing bounds to our outward actions, because it was abundantly enough for the securing them to oblige us to the highest degree of inward purity.

And this it hath done above all the laws and religions in the world. It teacheth us to abhor every thing that is evil or impure in all the kinds of it, in all the degrees of it, and in all the tendencies towards it; and to lay out ourselves in the pursuit of every thing that is honest, that is lovely, that is praise-worthy, and of good report among men.

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If this now be the deſign of our religion, and theſe be the laws of it, I leave it to you to judge of theſe two things: Firſt, Whether it doth not highly concern all of us that profeſs this holy religion, to endeavour, in all our converſation, to be as holy and as virtuous as we can, and to do as much good as we can, and not to content ourſelves with ſuch a degree of honeſty and virtue, as is juſt ſufficient to the rendering us not vicious? And then, ſecondly, Whether, if we do thus endeavour, we can eaſily be at a loſs, in diſtinguiſhing between good and evil, duty and ſin, in any inſtance? and conſequently, Whether we can be much in danger of ill uſing our liberty, and ſo tranſgreſſing upon that account?

I have been longer upon this firſt head than I intended, but I ſhall make amends for it, by diſpatching the two following, in ſo much the fewer words. And indeed, after ſo large an account as I have given of the general rule, there is leſs need of dwelling upon particular ones.

II. In the ſecond place, in order to the right uſe of our liberty, and ſo ſecuring ourſelves from falling into ſin, through miſtaking the meaſures of good and evil, this will be a good rule to propoſe to ourſelves, namely, *That in matters of duty, we ſhould rather do too much than too little: But in matters of indifferency, we ſhould rather take too little of our liberty than too much.*

Firſt, As to matters of duty, my meaning is this; That where the laws of God have generally and indefinitely commanded a thing, but have not ſet down rules about the particular meaſures and proportions of it; in that caſe, it is adviſeable, rather to do more than we are perhaps preciſely bound to do, that ſo we

may be sure we have performed our duty; than by being scanty in our obedience, to run the hazard of falling short of our duty.

Thus for instance, our Lord in the New-testament hath often and solemnly commanded us to pray. But neither he nor his apostles have any where told us how often we are to pray; only they have bid us pray frequently. In this case now, a man that makes a conscience of performing his duty, will take all occasions and opportunities of lifting up holy hands, and devout affections to his heavenly Father: However, he will not fail, at least once every time he riseth, and once every time he goes to rest, to offer up a solemn sacrifice of prayer and praise. Less than this, I say, he must not do, for fear he break the commandment of praying frequently, praying continually. But more than this it will become him to do, in order to the giving himself satisfaction, that he hath fully performed it.

Thus again, To give alms to the poor, is an indispensable duty of our religion. But what proportion of our substance we are to give away in alms and charity, is no where set down; but is wholly left to our discretion. Now, in this case, it is certainly much more advisable to give liberally, and largely, and plentifully, even as much as our condition in this world, and the necessities of our families can allow; though by so doing, we shall prove to have given in greater abundance than we were strictly obliged to, than by giving stingily and pinchingly, now and then a little pocket-money or so, to run the hazard of being transgressors of the commandment, and having our portion among the covetous and unmerciful.

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There is no damage comes to a man by doing the former; but on the contrary, a great deal of good: for God never fails bounteouſly to reward the bountiful hand. But there is both damage and infinite danger in the latter. And thus we are to practiſe in all other duties.

Only this caution we muſt take along with us: That we are always ſo to proportion the meaſures of every ſingle duty, as to render it conſiſtent with the performance of the other duties of our lives.

As for inſtance, we muſt not ſpend ſo much time in prayer, as to hinder the purſuit of our callings, and neceſſary buſineſs. We muſt ſo give alms, as yet to leave ourſelves enough to pay every one their own, and to make a competent proviſion for our families. But let us but take care to ſecure this, and then we cannot eaſily exceed in the meaſures of any duty. The more we pray, and the more we give alms, ſtill the better: And ſo in all other inſtances of duty.

But now in the ſecond place, the quite contrary to this, are we to practiſe, in matters of liberty. There the rule is, rather to take leſs than is allowed us, than to take all: Rather to abridge ourſelves of our lawful liberties, than by doing all that we may lawfully do, indanger our falling into ſin.

There is no harm at all in departing from our rights and privileges with which God hath indulged us: But there is a great harm in extending them beyond their bounds. There is no evil in not gratifying our deſires and appetites in all the things they crave, which are allowable, and which we are permitted to gratify them in: But there is an infinite evil in gratifying them in unlawful, forbidden inſtances. And therefore, every wiſe and good man will be ſure to keep on

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the safe side; and to prevent the danger of doing more than he should do, he will not always do all that he may do.

The truth is, That man that makes no scruple of using his liberty to the utmost stretch and extent of it upon all occasions, and regards nothing more in his actions, than just that he do not fall into some direct sin; that man cannot always be innocent, but will be drawn into an hundred irregularities and miscarriages.

Thus for example, he that useth himself to eat or to drink to the utmost pitch that can be said to be within the limits of temperance, it is impossible, but such a one will, now and then, be unavoidably overtaken in the sin of gluttony or drunkenness.

He that will use all the liberties that the law allows him, for the making advantages to himself in his trade, or his dealings with other men; such a one will not be able to avoid the just imputation of being in many instances an oppressor, or a hard-conscienced man.

The safest way, therefore, if we mean to preserve our virtue, amidst the multitude of snares and temptations that we meet with in the world, is to set bounds even to our lawful liberties; to keep our actions within such a compass, as not to come even near the confines of vice and sin.

Though it is but a point, and that often an undiscernable one, that distinguisheth between what is lawful and what is unlawful; yet there is a great latitude in what is lawful. That is, if I gratify my appetites but a little, I do that which is lawful? and if I gratify them more, I may do that which is lawful likewise: But he shews the most honest and virtuous mind, that in his actions takes but a little of this latitude,

tude, and by that means keeps himſelf at a good diſtance from that which is vicious and criminal.

III. But thirdly and laſtly, To what degree ſoever we may think fit to make uſe of our liberty, yet at all times, as ſoon as we begin to doubt or fear we have gone as far as we lawfully can go; it is then high time to break off, and to proceed no farther. This is the laſt rule I have to offer upon this occaſion. And thus alſo, where-ever we have a juſt ground of ſuſpicion or doubt, whether a thing be lawful or no; this doubt or ſuſpicion is of itſelf reaſon enough to make us forbear that thing. Unleſs indeed there be a neceſſity, or a great charity to be ſerved by the doing of it, which may in reaſon over-ballance the ſuſpicion of its lawfulneſs.

Thus in matters of recreation, if we have the leaſt doubt, whether this or the other pleaſure or divertiſement be innocent and lawful; why, that is argument enough, without more ado, to make us forbear it; tho' perhaps we ſee others uſe it without ſcruple.

Thus in matters of temperance, when we firſt begin to ſuſpect that we have drank as much as is convenient for us; let us by all means leave off, and break from the company.

Thus in matters of ſobriety, when we have reaſon to doubt, that we are come up to the full bounds of the chriſtian gravity and modeſty; and that any degree more of pomp or bravery in our garb, or in our attendance, or in our equipage, will reliſh of pride or vanity, or affectation; it is high time, rather to abate ſomething of our ſumptuouſneſs in theſe things, than to proceed any farther.

And thus, laſtly, in matters of equity and juſtice, when we firſt begin to have a ſuſpicion, that ſuch a practice is an indirect or knaviſh trick, or that we are

too severe and hard upon a man, upon whom we have got an advantage; why this suspicion alone is enough in reason to check us in our career, and to put us upon more fair and moderate courses.

This is a rule, that will for ever be fit for us to practise; for it is grounded upon eternal reason. Indeed, it is as old as morality: *Quod dubitas ne feceris:* Do nothing that you doubt of, is a maxim that obtained among the heathens, as well as among us christians.

I dare not indeed say, that this rule holds universally in all cases; for cases do sometimes happen, wherein it will be advisable for a man to act even against his doubts. But in such matters as I am now speaking of, matters wherein a man is at perfect liberty, to act or not to act; in all such cases, it will always, without exception, be a true, and a safe, and a wise rule. And I am sure, if men would seriously charge themselves with the practice of it, they would hereby prevent a multitude of sins and transgressions, with which they usually inflame their accounts against the day of judgment.

And thus much for the rules I had to propose, as to the use of our liberty, in such cases where a man is at a loss, in finding out the measures and bounds of duty and sin, and upon that account, is in danger of transgressing. I have only two things more to add upon this argument, by way of application, and I have done. The one as a caution to prevent the misapplying these rules; the other as an encouragement to put them in practice.

That which I have to say, by way of caution, is this; That what I have been now recommending, especially under the two last heads, is not intended to be a rule or direction to any hypochondriac, or melancholy

lancholy perſons, or ſuch as are apt to be over-ſcrupulous about their actions: For, indeed, to ſuch perſons, it is the worſt advice that can be given.

For they are apt to doubt and boggle at every thing, be it never ſo innocent and free from blame. They dare not eat a hearty meal, for fear of being intemperate. And for fear of not being devout enough, they exhauſt their ſpirits, and ſpoil their health, thro' the continual intention of their minds to ſerious things.

Now perſons that are of this temper, are rather to be encouraged to take more liberties than they do, than to abate any that they make uſe of.

But their caſe is of another conſideration, and foreign to my preſent purpoſe; and therefore I here ſay no more about it: It being ſufficient to have given this intimation to ſuch people, that they do not make an ill uſe of any thing that I have now repreſented; for aſſuredly, what hath been now ſaid, doth not much concern them.

2. The other thing I have to ſay, and that by way of encouragement, is this; I doubt not, but ſome will be apt to think, that the rules I have now given about the exerciſe of our liberty, are much too ſtrict and ſevere; and that if they muſt be tied up to ſuch meaſures, then farewel all the joy, and pleaſure, and comfort of their lives. But to ſuch people I would crave leave to ſay, that they have very wrong notions of this matter.

The uſing of their liberty in ſuch a manner as I have been recommending, would not rob them of one true pleaſure or comfort that this world affords. So far from it, that I am very ſure, whoever frames his life according to theſe meaſures, ſhall live a hundred times a happier life, and ſhall enjoy the world, and all

the pleasures and advantages of it, much more to his own content and satisfaction, than if he put no check to the craving of his appetites, but always indulged and gratified them in every thing, and as much as they desired.

Assure yourselves, virtue and religion will never hinder you from enjoying any pleasure or satisfaction that is natural. On the contrary, there is great reason to believe, that the practice thereof will extremely heighten and advance the satisfactions you can receive from your worldly enjoyments. I doubt not in the least, but to a sincerely pious and virtuous man, and that hath a regard to God in all his actions, even the very pleasures and comforts of this life are more gratifying and affecting, than to any sensual or wicked man: For such a one, as he is more capable of enjoying them, so do they come to him likewise without the mixtures of those uneasy, troublesome, bitter reflections, that other men feel in the very best of their enjoyments.

Let no man, therefore, apprehend any loss of his pleasures, by entirely devoting himself to God's service, and using his liberty in that careful way I have been recommending. Let him not think that he shall hereby be too much straitned and confined. For certainly this is the true means, not only to keep him for ever from being a slave to any thing, but also mightily to improve and increase his liberty.

For by thus exercising himself, all the powers of his soul will be vastly enlarged, and he will hereby attain both leisure and will, to employ all his rational faculties about the best and the noblest objects in the world, which will yield him the greatest pleasure that is to be had on this side heaven. Whereas if he had given himself up to be governed by any of his sensual appe-

tites,

tites, he had been a poor, narrow, confined creature indeed, not capable of any greater ſatisfactions or pleaſures, than what the brutes do enjoy, as well as himſelf; but with leſs uneaſineſs, and fewer diſturbances.

It is true, indeed, a ſenſual man hath no notion of this kind of pleaſures, no more than a beaſt hath of the pleaſures of a man: And, therefore it is no wonder that ſuch men entertain all talk about them, as little better than mere cant and jargon. But I ſeriouſly appeal to all men that have made any trials in the way of religion and virtue, whether the contentments and ſatisfactions they have received from the rational uſe of their liberty, and the thoughts and reflections that hereby they do approve themſelves to God, and live in hopes of his favour, and have a fair proſpect of a glorious immortal ſtate in another world; I ſay, Whether they do not find the pleaſures and contentments that ariſe from hence, to be infinitely more ſolid, and ſubſtantial, and durable, than any of thoſe that they receive from the gratification of their ſenſual appetites, in a vicious unreaſonable manner?

Oh, therefore, let none of us make any ſcruple of devoting ourſelves entirely and without reſerve to God Almighty's ſervice. Let none of us be afraid to put reaſonable reſtraints upon our paſſions and appetites. Aſſuredly the thus uſing our liberty, is the certain way to preſerve and increaſe it, and with it the pleaſure and comfort of our lives; and not only ſo, but to render us everlaſtingly happy, and bleſſed in the other world.

Which that we may all be, *God of his infinite mercy grant*, &c.

SERMON VIII.

Virtue and Religion the only means to make a Nation prosperous.

DEUT. v. 29.

O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!

THESE are the words of God to Moses, concerning the children of Israel. And two things may be gathered from them:

I. His serious desire of their happiness.

II. The means whereby that happiness is to be attained.

The first of these is imported in that solemn wish, into which the text is framed; *O that there were such an heart in them*, &c. *that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever.*

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The second is imported in the way of connecting the former part of the wish, with that which follows: *O that there were such an heart in them!* what then? *That they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always*; And why so? It follows, *That it might be well with them, and with their children for ever.* Which plainly implies, That the way to have things well with them, and with their children, is to fear God, and keep all his commandments always.

I have but one thing more to observe concerning the text, and that is this: That the wish or desire that God here expresses of Israel's virtue and happiness, doth not so much relate to the Israelites, consider'd singly, and as particular persons (though it cannot be denied, but it doth extend to them, even under that notion) but it chiefly relates to the children of Israel, consider'd collectively, that is to say, under the notion of a people or nation. God here expresses his care of the whole nation, and seriously wishes they may be a happy people, they and their children after them.

Two points then we have from this text, very proper to be insisted on, upon this occasion; which therefore I shall make the heads of my following discourse.

First, *That God is seriously concerned for the good and happiness of nations and kingdoms, as well as that of particular persons*; *and more especially of those nations that profess his true religion.*

Secondly, *That the happiness and prosperity of nations, is to be attained the same way that any particular man's happiness is*; that is to say, *by fearing God, and keeping his commandments.*

I. I begin with the first, *That God is seriously concerned for the good and happiness of nations and king-*

doms, as well as that of particular perſons : and more eſpecially of all thoſe nations that profeſs his true religion.

I do not think this is much doubted of by any chriſtian ; and therefore I need not inſiſt on a laborious proof of it.

That God who doth not overlook the meaneſt and the moſt inconſiderable creatures that he hath made ; but ſo far concerns himſelf in taking care of them, and providing for them, that not ſo much as a *ſparrow* (if we may believe our Saviour) *doth fall to the ground, without his will :* Can it be imagined, that he is not more concerned for the happineſs and well-being of the nobleſt part of the viſible creation, mankind, who bear his own image, and whom he looks upon as his own children ? Certainly he is.

And that God whoſe care and providence doth ſo particularly extend to every individual man, that (as the ſame our Lord Jeſus ſpeaks) *the very hairs of our head are numbered by him :* Can it be imagined, that he doth not ſtill take more care of the greater bodies and combinations of men, ſuch as nations and kingdoms, which are ſo many ways more conſiderable than ſingle men, and in whoſe fortunes the good or ill of particular perſons is ſo wholly bound up ? Certainly he doth.

And laſtly, That God, who is the author, the preſerver, the protector of all public ſocieties, *by whom kings reign, and magiſtrates decree juſtice :* Can it be imagined that he hath not ſtill a more particular regard to thoſe nations that he hath been pleaſed to call by his own name, and hath choſen for his own people (ſuch as were the Iſraelites in my text, of old ; and

and such are all those people and nations now that do profess his true religion) ? Certainly he hath.

Thus natural reason will teach us to argue. And that it is a right way of arguing, is confirmed to us by our Saviour [a], and St. Paul [b]; both of which we find reasoning after this manner.

To quote to you all that the scripture saith upon this argument, would be endless. One of the great designs of God's word, is to possess us with a hearty belief, that God, as he is the creator, so he is also the governor of the world; and that his providence extends to all the things and persons in it: And that the constant rule and measure of that providence, is no other than the good of the world, and the good of every person in it, so far as his private good is consistent with the public. And that therefore as God designs all good to every particular man, so doth he more especially design the good of nations and kingdoms in all his dispensations of providence to them. Nor is there any thing happens in any nation or kingdom, but with his approbation. Even the severest visitations that come upon mankind, are from him. *There is no evil happens to a city, but the Lord hath done it.*[c] Though yet *judgment is his strange work:*[d] And *mercy and loving-kindness is the thing wherein he delights.*[e] *He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.*[f] But sometimes it is necessary that nations should be scourged; yet even that is for the greater good of mankind: *that* thus *when God's judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world may learn righteousness.*[g]

[a] Matt. vi. 26, 30. [b] 1 Cor. ix. 9. [c] Amos iii. 6. [d] Isa. xxviii. 21. [e] Mic. vii. 18. [f] Lam. iii. 33. [g] Isa. xxvi. 9.

But then as for his own people, thoſe upon whom his name is called, thoſe that are in covenant with him, and profeſs his true religion; for them, upon all occaſions, he declares ſo great a tenderneſs and concernment; that there is hardly any figure of ſpeech, that the moſt ſenſible man can make uſe of, for the expreſſing his moſt paſſionate love to his deareſt friend or relation, tho' it be his wife or his children, but the very ſame figures are made uſe of by the holy inſpired writers, to ſet out to us the kindneſs and concernment that God hath for his own people. He is their God, their king, their ſhepherd, their father, their huſband. They are his choſen ones; his delight; his peculiar treaſure. He rejoiceth over them to do them good. His bowels yearn, his heart is turned within him, his repentings are kindled together, when through their miſcarriages, he is forced to paſs any ſevere ſentence upon them. All this is the language of God in ſcripture, when he ſpeaks of his people; and therefore, we cannot doubt of his ſincere affection to them, and particular care of them.

All the doubt is, Whether theſe expreſſions ought to be applied to any other people than the *Jews*, with reſpect to whom the ſcripture uſeth them. But we that believe the goſpel, need not make much doubt of it. For it is certain, the reaſon of all theſe expreſſions of kindneſs to the Jews, more than to other nations, was founded in this; that they were the people whom God had choſen to plant his church among. They were the people where his religion was owned. But now it is evident to all chriſtians, that after our Saviour came into the world, and preached his goſpel to all nations, the Jews, as a nation, ceaſed to be God's church, or peculiar people; and, from that time,

time, all those nations that embraced Christ's religion came into their place, and were from thence-forward to be as dear to God, and as much his care and his treasure, as ever the Jews were. And, upon that account, we of this nation may, with as much reason, apply the expressions of scripture to ourselves, which declare God's kindness and concernment for his people, as ever the Jews did.

Especially considering, that God has owned us of this nation for his people, in as remarkable a manner as any nation in christendom; as appears not only from that glorious light of the gospel, which he has for many years blessed us with, above any other people, perhaps in the christian world; but also from the wonderful providences, by which he has from time to time preserved our church, and with it the true religion among us, notwithstanding the various attempts of our enemies to subvert it. O may these mercies of God to our nation, never be forgotten, and may we always remember them with that due thankfulness they call for at our hands.

And thus much of our first head. I beg leave to draw a practical inference or two from what hath been said, before I proceed to the other.

First, Since it appears, that God sits at the helm, and steers and manages all the affairs of mankind; and that public societies are more especially the objects of his care and providence; methinks this consideration should be a good antidote against all those troublesome fears and solicitudes we are apt to disturb ourselves with, about the success of public matters.

If, indeed, all things went in the world by chance or fate, and there was no God that did superintend human affairs; I should think it very natural for men to be

extremely concerned, at every piece of ill news they heard. It might be allowed them to break their ſleep in the night, and to complain diſmally in the day, of the ſad times that were coming upon us. But ſince we are certain, as much as we are certain there is a God, and as much as we are certain that the ſcripture is true; that all our affairs, our public as well as private affairs; the affairs both in church and ſtate, are entirely in God Almighty's diſpoſal, and that he doth really manage and order all things among us; and likewiſe ſo manageth them, that all ſhall at laſt turn to the good of his people, and to the good of every honeſt man: I ſay, ſince we are, or may be ſatisfied, that our buſineſs is in ſo good hands, I muſt confeſs, I do not ſee what reaſon people have, to give themſelves ſo much trouble and uneaſineſs, about things that may, or may not come.

Thus far, indeed, it is fit that every one ſhould be concerned: Nay, it is fit that every one ſhould charge his conſcience with it; namely, to do his duty to the public, in his place and ſtation; to contribute all that is in his power towards the procuring and promoting the common happineſs; and to endeavour all that in him lies, towards the averting thoſe judgments we have reaſon to fear. But when a man hath done this, to what purpoſe is it for him to trouble himſelf any further? I ſhould think he had better follow our Saviour's advice, which, when all things are conſider'd, will be found eternally prudent and reaſonable: *Take no thought for to-morrow; let the morrow take care for the things of itſelf: ſufficient unto the day, is the evil thereof*[h].

Secondly, This doctrine ought to teach us this farther leſſon; to depend altogether upon God Almighty, and

[h] Matt. vi. 34.

and upon him only, for the good success of our affairs, either in church or state, whenever they are in a doubtful or dangerous condition. For *though many are the devices in the hearts of men; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand*[i]. It is in vain to trust human means: For, be our strength never so great; or be those that manage for us never so industrious; or be our hearts never so much united; yet it is an easy matter for God to blast all our designs, and to disappoint all our counsels in a moment.

He hath often done so, where men have been cōnident in their own strength. In one night's time he made that prodigious army of Assyrians that came up against Jerusalem[k], and thought themselves sure of taking it, to decamp, and fly back into their own country, leaving a hundred and fourscore thousand of their number dead upon the place.

There is in truth no trusting to an arm of flesh. For the successes of war depend upon a thousand contingencies, which it is not in the power of mortal men, either to foresee, or remedy. So that *the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor can a king be saved by the multitude of an host, nor any mighty man be delivered by his much strength*[l]: But the *God of heaven that ruleth in the kingdoms of men*[m], it is he that preserves or destroys; that gives victory, or sends a defeat, as it pleaseth him. And therefore he is, by way of eminence, stiled, The Lord of hosts, the God of battles.

On the other hand, if our affairs at any time be in so very bad a posture, that we cannot avoid the having a melancholy and dismal prospect of things; yet let us

[i] Prov. xix. 21. [k] 2 Kings, xix. 34. [l] Eccles. ix. 11. [m] Psal. xxxiii. 16.

us not be discouraged, let us still trust in God; let us do what belongs to us to do for the obtaining his mercy and favour, and then refer the event to him. God hath certainly a kindness for his people, and if we do our parts towards the preserving his affection to us, we may still hope he will continue to be our Saviour and deliverer.

It is as easy to God to save by few, as by many [n]; the walls of Jericho, at his command, fell down flat, only at the sound of rams-horns [o]: And when the city of Samaria was besieged, and brought into the greatest extremity that was possible, so that women even eat their own children; yet in one night, God, by an unaccountable terror, which he struck into the hearts of the enemies, raised the siege. And such plenty was left in their camp, that every one of the besieged had wherewith, not only to satisfy his hunger, but to enrich himself: Only that nobleman that would not believe this when it was foretold by the prophet, did not live to taste of the fruits of God Almighty's victory, being trodden to death in the crowd.

II. But it is time to come to the second general point I observed from this text; viz. *That the happiness or prosperity of nations is to be attained the same way that any particular man's happiness is*; that is to say, *by being sincerely virtuous and religious*; or, as my text expresses it, *by fearing God, and keeping all his commandments always.*

This is a true proposition, both with respect to particular persons, and to nations too; but with this difference, that if we take happiness and prosperity for that which the world accounts so, that is to say, the possession of a great many outward blessings, and the

[n] Josh. vi. 20. [o] 2 Kings chap. vii.

the freedom from temporal evils and inconveniencies; the proposition is not so universally true, with reference to particular persons, as it is with reference to nations and kingdoms. For every man that fears God, is not always blessed with happy outward circumstances. On the contrary, some good men are exposed to many and great afflictions, and misfortunes, and sicknesses, and crosses, all their lives long. But it is certainly true of all nations and people whatsoever. Every nation or society shall fare better or worse in this world, exactly, according as they fear God, or despise and affront him; exactly, according to the degree they keep God's commandments, or break them. Though it is not certain that every particular man shall always do so. And there is great reason that it should be thus. For,

First, We know that all God's ways are just and equal. Now as to particular persons, there is a great room left for the dispensing this justice and equity to them. For they being in their natures made to live for ever, it is enough for the vindicating God's justice, that they be at any time hereafter, either rewarded for their piety and virtue, or punished for their wickedness and abuse of God's mercies; so that wicked men may be happy and prosperous here, and good men may suffer many afflictions and tribulations, without any the least reflection on the justice or goodness of the great Governor of the world: Because there is a farther day reserved for the adjusting all mens rewards, according to their works.

But now the consideration of public societies and nations, is quite different. Nations are not made to be immortal, but end with this world. No society, as a society, shall be called to a future account; but all

all the rewards and punishments, they are capable of as societies, must be adjudged and distributed to them in this present life. And therefore if we suppose God to be the judge and governor of the world, and of all the nations in it; as well as he is the judge and governor of particular persons; we must likewise suppose, that he administers all affairs so, that righteous and religious nations have in this world the reward of their virtue in the blessings of peace and plenty, and all manner of temporal prosperity: And on the other side, impious and incorrigible nations are likewise punished in this world for their wickedness, either by severe judgments, or by a total destruction; as God in his infinite wisdom sees cause.

This now that I have offered, is, I think, so reasonable, that if there was no more to be said, it ought to go a great way towards the making of the point I have in hand highly credible. But, in the second place, there is a great deal more to be said. The word of God doth all along bear testimony to the truth of this. A multitude of texts of scripture there are, that do most plainly give this account of God's dealing with nations and people, that I have now mentioned.

There is no judgment threatened to any nation in the holy scripture (and abundance of nations are there threatened) but it is upon the account of the sins and wickedness they were guilty of. Which sins if they repented of, so repented as to forsake them, they might find mercy.

And accordingly we find in fact, that God always dealt with people and nations according to these measures. God had solemnly denounced destruction to the city of Nineveh, by his prophet, and that within forty days. But upon the repentance of the Ninevites,

and turning to God with all their hearts, he reversed his sentence (though to the great discontent of the prophet) and gave them a further time.

On the other side, he waited long for the repentance of the Canaanites, but would not destroy them; because their sins, though very heinous, admitted a place for repentance. But when their iniquities were filled up to the measures according to which God proceeds in his destruction of nations; he then sent the Israelites to root them out, and to take possession of their land.

And thus was Nebuchadnezzar raised up by God, to be a scourge to all the nations about him, for the punishment of their sins. Nebuchadnezzar had, indeed, other things in his head. That which he design'd was, the gratifying his own ambition, and enlarging his dominions: But these were not the ends which God had to serve by him. God made use of him as his instrument, as his servant (and so he calls him) for the rendring to the nations that just recompence of vengeance which their sins called for.

I mention these things the rather because they are instances of God's dealing with heathen nations, who were under no particular covenant with God.

And I might have recourse likewise to the histories of all nations, to shew the truth of this. Name any nation that was ever remarkable for justice; for temperance, and severity of manners; for piety and religion (though it was in a wrong way;) that did not always thrive and grow great in the world; and that did not always enjoy a plentiful portion of all those things which are accounted to make a nation happy and flourishing. And, on the other side, when that nation has declined from its former virtue, and

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grown impious, and diſſolute in manners, we appeal to experience, whether it has not likewiſe always proportionably ſunk in its ſucceſs and good fortunes. I am ſure any one that will be at the pains to read either the Greek, or the Roman, or even the Turkiſh hiſtory, will meet with matter enough there to ſatisfy him of the truth of this obſervation.

But I confine myſelf to the ſcripture, and in that the hiſtory of the Jews is the moſt remarkable, for indeed it makes up a great part of the Old-teſtament. Now in that hiſtory it is worth our taking notice of, That every degree of public vice, and departure from God's laws, was always puniſhed with public judgments. And, on the other ſide, every degree of public repentance and reformation was always rewarded with public happineſs and proſperity: So that any one that could make a right eſtimate of the morals of that nation, and how it ſtood as to virtue and vice; might conſtantly make a judgment likewiſe how it would fare with them, as to their outward temporal affairs.

I muſt confeſs, that, generally ſpeaking, there is little force in thoſe arguments that are drawn from examples; but in the caſe I am now upon, I think there is a great weight in them. For though we cannot argue from God's dealing with one perſon, that he will juſt deal in the ſame manner with another; yet as to nations and kingdoms, the caſe is otherwiſe, as I before ſaid. For God's diſpenſations and providences to them, ſeem all to proceed upon one immutable foundation (which will be the ſame in all ages and countries) namely, the expreſſion and vindication of his juſtice and goodneſs in this world.

And

And for my part, I have always been of this mind, that there is no other difference between the history of God's dealings with his own people the Jews, and that of other nations, but this; That in no other nations the public events that happen'd, whether good or bad, though they were taken notice of, yet they passed without any reflection on the true causes from whence they proceeded. The historians did indeed often lay their fingers rightly upon the immediate visible, outward occasions, or means, or instruments, from whence their good or bad fortune was derived to them: But they searched no further. They consider'd only second causes, and took no great notice of the First and Principal Cause of all things, God Almighty, and his influencing human affairs. They left God, in a great measure, out of their hypothesis, and out of their history. But now, that the world might be awakened to a more hearty belief and sense of his providence, God took care to single out the nation of the Jews; and in them to give us a true pattern or platform of his dealings with all the nations of the world. And for that purpose he ordered, that all the great strokes both of their departure from God, and of their return to him; and likewise both of the good or bad fortune, that did at any time befal that nation, should be faithfully registered, and the true causes of them faithfully assigned; that all mankind might from thence receive instruction how they ought to behave themselves towards God: and what, according to their different behaviours, they were to expect.

To conclude this point: By all that hath been said, it appears, that the state, and condition, and fortune of all kingdoms and nations, is the very same with that

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of the Jews, as it is represented by Achior the Ammonite, in the advice he gave to Holofernes, when he came up with an army against that people. You have the passage in *Judith*, v. 17. *Whilst* (saith he) *these people sinned not before their God, they prospered; because the God that hateth iniquity was with them. But when they departed from the way that he appointed them, they were destroyed in many battles, after a wonderful sort, and were led captive into a land that was not theirs. But now they are turned to their God, and are come up from their captivity, and have again possessed Jerusalem: Now therefore, my lord and governor, if there be any fault in this people, so that they have sinned against their God, let us consider, that this shall be their ruin, and let us go up, that we may overcome them: But if there be no iniquity in this people, let my lord pass by, lest their Lord defend them, and their God be for them, and we become a reproach before all the world.*

Thus it is, and will be always with all states and nations: if they notoriously sin against their God, this will be their ruin; but if there be not found iniquity in them, it is in vain for any enemy to set upon them; for God will be for them, and their Lord will defend them.

If this which I have said be not sufficient to satisfy any one about the truth of this point, I might bring other proofs for it. I might, for instance, in the third place, insist upon this, that virtue and piety do, in their own nature, tend to promote the welfare and happiness of people and nations. As on the other hand, all vice and irreligion is destructive of human society: And this without respect to any appointment or decree of God, that things should be mana-

managed in this way; but purely in the very nature of the thing.

It is obvious, that virtue and religion lay the surest foundation for all those blessings, wherein the happiness of a nation doth consist, that is possible; both by making magistrates to govern well, and by rendering the people easy to be governed. And likewise by furnishing both the governors and the governed, with such kind of principles and habits, as cannot fail, with the blessing of God, to produce both peace and plenty, and victory, and all other sorts of prosperity in a nation.

As on the other hand, all vice and wickedness, and profaneness, and impiety, do sow the worst seeds in the world for the dissolving and breaking in pieces all societies: or at least, for the so enfeebling them, that they shall either be in a very low wretched condition among themselves, if they have no enemies, or, if they have any, become an easy prey to the next invader.

But I will not enter upon this argument, because I think the matter needs no further proof. And I would spend the rest of my time in making some application of what hath been said upon this point, to the business of our present meeting on this day.

WE are here met together for the solemn humiliation of ourselves with fasting and prayer, before Almighty God, in order to the supplicating his Divine Majesty for the pardon of our sins, and the sins of our nation; and the imploring his blessing and protection to the king and kingdom, by continuing those mercies to us we do enjoy; by averting those judgments from us we have reason to fear, and more particularly, by giving

giving a happy issue to that dangerous war in which his Majesty, with the kingdom, is now engaged.

And very great reason there is, that you, the representatives of the people of England, should most seriously, and solemnly join in this religious office; since the fortunes of the nation you represent, did never more lie at stake, than at this present.

You have hitherto been acting and endeavouring for the happiness and security of your nation by human methods, and we all put up our daily prayers, that what you have done, and what you shall do, may be *for the glory of God, and the good of his church; and the safety, honour, and welfare of their majesties and their kingdoms.* And we hope all will so come to pass.

But now on this day, both you and we are to think of other methods for the procuring success to our affairs. Namely, by having recourse to God Almighty, who, when we have done all that we can, is the governor of the world, and will do what he pleaseth. But yet will always do that which is best for mankind, and that too which is best for our nation, if we be capable objects of his favour. And to make ourselves such, if it be possible, is our business on this day.

This is indeed a seasonable business at all times; but at this time it seems absolutely necessary. Since we have reason to apprehend the crisis of our nation, as to happiness or ruin, to be upon the point of approaching.

The judgments of God are now abroad in the world. We have not only rumours of war sounding in our ears, but all Europe is now in an actual war, and a terrible one; and what the consequence will be, we know not.

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Some very great thing God certainly designs to bring to pass in these parts of the world, and that very suddenly. A cup he has mingled for all the nations to drink of. Which to some undoubtedly will prove a bitter potion, a cup of God's wrath and fury; to others probably a cup of salvation. But how it will prove to us is yet entirely in the will of God. However this is certain, that we of this nation shall have as much our share in it, be it good or bad, as any other in christendom.

And now after the mention of this, can there be any need to call upon any one to *weeping*, and *fasting*, and *mourning*, and *crying mightily to the Lord, that he would have mercy upon us, and spare us*, and our nation, and *not give his heritage over to confusion?* Why methinks the circumstances we are in, should put us upon so doing, without any other monitors. Indeed we have no humanity, no compassion for ourselves or our country, if we do not.

We should all be of this mind, if we did seriously consider how things stand with us.

We are not that innocent, virtuous, pious people that may certainly reckon upon God's favour, and think ourselves in all cases sure of his protection. For if the doctrine I have now been insisting on to you, be true doctrine; then we of this nation can but entertain very small hopes of being happy and prosperous. Nay, we cannot but apprehend misery and ruin, and desolation to ourselves; unless God be abundantly more merciful to us than we deserve. And there can be no way to prevail with him to be so, but an universal humiliation and repentance. And this is the application I desire to make of the point I have been now treating of.

If

If the measure of God's dealing with nations be always according to the moral state of them; if their good fortunes be dealt out to them according to their virtues; and judgments be inflicted upon them, according to their provoking God by their sins; as we have said; good Lord! what a lamentable prospect have we of this kingdom of what may come upon us? And what infinite reason have we thereupon, immediately to try all the ways that are possible of making our peace with God, that so iniquity may not be our ruin.

I beg leave to dwell a little on this point, because it is the proper argument of the day.

I do not say, nor do I think, that we of this nation are worse than our neighbours. But this I say, considering how long God hath spared us, and how long we have enjoyed the blessings of peace and plenty, and all sorts of prosperity (though perhaps with many fears and just apprehensions of danger) whilst most of our neighbours have been harassed with wars, and exposed to all the cruelties and miseries of persecutions and devastations: and considering the great privileges and advantages we have for many years enjoyed, of all the outward means of grace, that could be desired for the eternal salvation of our souls, and that above any other nation under heaven; and withal, how unprofitable we have been under these means, how unthankful to God for them, and what little effect they have had upon us for the bettering our manners: And lastly, considering how very wicked we generally are, what a world of open gross sins and impieties do reign among us, and what a lewd, prophane, hypocritical, atheistical spirit seems to have gone out into the nation, and to prevail upon it: I say, these things con-

considered, we cannot make any very comfortable reflections on our own condition. So far from that, that if (as I said) the measure of God's dealings with nations be taken from their behaviours and moral qualities, and be suited to their merits and deserts, we have as little to hope for, as most nations under heaven.

I take no delight in saying these things; on the contrary, it is very grievous: But if ever one may be allowed to run out into a declamation against the vices of the times, it is upon such an occasion as this, and before such an audience as this, that the liberty may be challenged.

For God's-sake let us not deceive ourselves, nor think that we are favourites of heaven, merely because we profess the best religion, and are made members of the best church in the world.

For as good as our church and religion is, and as zealous as we seem to be for them, yet never did vice and iniquity of all sorts, and indeed every thing that is contrary to our holy religion, more abound in this nation, than at this day.

Give me leave to speak out upon this occasion, and to tell you some of the crying sins that reign among us, and that deserve your care to put a stop to; and which, if they be continued in, will certainly bring down the vengeance of God upon us.

Where was there ever more atheism and infidelity to be seen in a country that professed the religion of Jesus Christ, than is among us at this day?

We do not perhaps meet with very many that do openly affirm, *There is no God*: For as bad as we are, God be thanked, we are not yet arrived to such impudence. That is such an affront to the laws and to good

manners, as is not to be born with. But we may meet with ſeveral every day, that do affirm the ſame thing by conſequence; aſſerting ſuch principles from whence it may be neceſſarily concluded.

For my part, I account it much the ſame thing, as to the ill effects of the opinion, to deny the being of God; as to deny the being of angels and ſpirits, and immaterial ſouls; to deny the being of particular providence; to deny the natural difference between good and evil; to deny another life after this, wherein good men ſhall be rewarded, and wicked men puniſhed; to deny the liberty of human actions; and to ſay that all things which we do, we do by a fatal neceſſity, and we cannot do otherwiſe: And yet we may every day meet with men of theſe principles, nay, and that laugh at all thoſe that maintain the contrary.

But then, as for the buſineſs of Jeſus Chriſt, and that which we call the chriſtian religion, what a very little do a great many among us make of that? To talk of Chriſt's being ſent for the Saviour of the world, and that he died to procure the pardon of our ſins, and that we muſt believe all the Scripture-doctrines concerning him, and worſhip him as a God; why what ſtuff is this to a great many of the refined ſpirits of our age? It is very well if they can ſo far prevail with themſelves, as to own the being of God, and to acknowledge their obligation to the duties of moral honeſty and juſtice, which natural religion teacheth: But as for Jeſus Chriſt, and the Trinity, and the ſacraments, and all revealed religion; they beg your pardon for theſe things, they are too nice and ſubtil for them to meddle with. Not but that they are good chriſtians all the while: For they can come to our churches, and to our ſacraments too, if there be occaſion:

sion: Because indeed they will always be of the religion of the country where they live. But at the same time they do this, they do no more really believe, or expect any spiritual benefit in our religion, nor look for any more salvation from Christ Jesus, than they would expect from Mahomet, if they should live in Turky.

But this is not all. Even among those that do believe in Jesus Christ, and own his religion; yet what little regard have they, generally speaking, to his worship and service?

It is very well if they now and then afford their presence on Sundays, at the public religious assemblies. I will not examine with what designs, and for what ends they come thither, nor how devoutly and religiously their hearts are affected during the time they are there: I say, it is very well that they are there at all.

But even of those that do come thither, and do once a week seem to have a sense of public religion; I say, how few are there of them that take any care of worshipping God, either in their families, or in their closets?

Why, if a man were truly religious, he could not pass a day without solemn addresses to his maker, and to his redeemer. He would pray in the closet constantly; and if he had a family, he would pray with them constantly. And if he had no family, he would constantly resort to those places where he might pay his tribute of public prayer and praises to God, unless he had urgent business to hinder him.

But, is there any thing of this to be seen among us, except in some few persons here and there? Are there not twenty families for one that live without so much as the shew of any devotion? Without any sort of

prayer or worſhip of God in their houſes? Nay, and I am afraid, I may ſay, there are twenty for one, even of private perſons, that live without devotion in their cloſets; that never call upon God, never renew their vows to their Saviour, never pay him any homage, except perhaps once a week in a formal way, when the cuſtom of the country obliges them to reſort to the church.

The truth is, ſo little ſenſe have moſt of us of religion and devotion; ſo little regard of our duty to God, and our dependance upon him, and expreſſing that dependance, either in private, or in our families; that were it not for that happy inſtitution of the Lord's-day, on the which we are obliged, by the laws of God and man, to meet together for the worſhip of God; we ſhould hardly ſee any face of religion among us, and in a little time ſhould ſcarce be diſtinguiſhed from heathens.

But yet this is not the worſt of our caſe. Our groſs immoralities, that horrid lewdneſs and debauchery, that is every where to be obſerved in our days, doth ſtill increaſe our guilt, and cry to heaven for judgment upon our nation.

It would make a man's heart ake, that has any ſenſe of God or religion, to think of the riots, the drunkenneſs, the continued courſe of ſpending our time, and our parts, and our ſubſtance, in revelling and gaming, and all manner of ſuch exceſſes that are daily practiſed among us. And yet at the ſame time the men that thus live, think themſelves very honeſt men all the while.

It would really amaze a man, and put him upon admiring God's patience, that he doth not preſently confound the world, if he did ſeriouſly reflect on the

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many filthy, lewd speeches and actions, the numerous wicked intrigues of lust, the infamous whoredoms and adulteries that are, without any sense of shame, daily carried on and acted among us, and that by persons too that have the face to shew themselves at our holy assemblies.

Especially, if to these be added the infinite lyes, and cheats, and perjuries, which our land groans under; the blasphemous oaths and imprecations, the damn-me's and sink-me's; the horrid profanations of the name of God, and all things sacred, that are in every place, in every street where we pass, belch'd out, in contempt of the Almighty and his laws; by all sorts of persons, of all sorts of qualities, from the beggar in the street, to the man of honour; and that for no other reason in the world, but because it is their humour or their custom.

And lastly, to fill up the measure of our iniquities, to our other reigning vices we have added that of hypocrisy too; which one would think should not often be found among so much profaneness.

How many of us make a mighty noise with religion, and are zealous even to bigotry, in the defence of it, and yet have not one grain of inward sense of what it obligeth them to? Nay, so far from that, that if religion be but in their mouths; if they do but appear zealous enough for the protestant cause; if they can but cry loud enough, *The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord*, as the Jews did in the prophet: They matter not how contradictory their actions are to the precepts of that religion they do profess. Their zeal for so good a cause will sanctify all their other actions, be they never so wicked and unjust.

But if this be not hypocriſy, there is no ſuch thing in the world. Sure I am, it was this ſort of carriage that God ſo often reproves the Jews for, by his prophets; and upon account of which they are ſo often reproached as a generation of hypocrites, and for which he threatens them with utter deſtruction.

O my brethren, what have we to ſay to theſe things? If the caſe be thus with us, as I am afraid it is; what plea have we to put in for ourſelves? If God ſhould let looſe our enemies upon us, the enemies of our nation, and of our religion, and ſhould give us over as a prey unto them, what have we to reply? Truly nothing that I know of, except that of the pſalmiſt, *Righteous art thou, O Lord, and juſt are thy judgments.*

But we truſt God's lenity and forbearance, and mercy, is as great to public ſocieties and kingdoms, as it is to private perſons; and, that we may apply thoſe expreſſions to our nation, which David uttered with reference to himſelf; *O Lord, if thou ſhouldeſt be extreme to mark what is done amiſs, O Lord, who may abide it? But there is mercy with thee, that thou mayeſt be feared.*

When the iniquities of a people are at the full, God will not fail to puniſh them. But whether ours be ſo or no, he only knows. We hope, though they be very grievous and crying, they have not exceeded the meaſure of God's patience, and that there is yet left a place for repentance. This is indeed the only plank we have to truſt to, that can ſave us from ſhipwreck, and therefore we ought to lay hold upon it.

Let us therefore this day, every one of us, if we have any kindneſs for our native country; if we have any reſpect to that dear place, where we and our anceſtors,

ceſtors, and all our relations and kindred for many generations have lived ſo happily;

If we have any zeal for, or regard to that excellent church, and that holy religion, that God did in ſo extraordinary a manner plant among us; and for the preſerving of which in our land, his care and providence hath ſo often and ſo wonderfully appeared;

If we have any concernment for many thouſands of innocent ſouls, who without their own fault may deeply ſuffer for the nation's ſins;

Laſtly, If we have any bowels of compaſſion to thoſe dear children of ours, that God hath given us, that we may tranſmit to them, and their children after them, that birth-right, and thoſe privileges, and that excellent religion we received from our fathers;

I ſay, if we have any ſenſe of theſe things, let every one of us this day, moſt ſincerely apply ourſelves to the ſervice of God, in all the ways of a ſerious virtue and piety. Or if we have been careleſs of this matter, heretofore: or, which is worſe, have been lewd or wicked in our lives; yet let us now at laſt heartily repent of it. And with prayers and tears, and the moſt ſolemn reſolutions of amendment, proſtrate ourſelves before the throne of grace; imploring and beſeeching God's pardon and forgiveneſs, and if it be poſſible, a lengthening of our tranquillity.

O let us not refuſe this opportunity of doing the greateſt kindneſs, and the beſt ſervice to our country that we poſſibly can. And therefore let us not only heartily bewail our own ſins, but the reigning impieties and wickedneſs that our nation ſtands accountable for.

Now is the time if ever, that we are all concerned to be importunate with God for ourſelves and our country.

And a fitter prayer for this purpose cannot be composed for us, than that which Daniel put up to God for his nation, and that at such a solemn time as this, when, as he tells he, he had *set himself to seek God for his people, by prayer, and supplication, with fasting, and sackcloth and ashes.*

The prayer is in the ninth chapter of his prophecy; and I shall conclude with it, and I earnestly beg of you all to join with me in it.

O Lord, the great and dreadful God, that keepest the covenant, and shewest mercy to them that love thee, and to them that keep thy commandments.

We have sinned and done wickedly, and have committed iniquity, and have rebelled; even by departing from thy precepts, and from thy judgments.

O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee; but unto us confusion of face, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, because we have sinned against thee.

But unto the Lord our God belongeth mercy and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him, neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in his laws which he set before us.

O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, we beseech thee, let thy anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: Because for our sins, and the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us.

Now therefore, O God, hear the prayer of thy servants, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary.

O God, incline thine ear and hear: Open thine eyes, and behold the city which is called by thy name.

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O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do. Defer not, for thine own sake, O our God: For thy city and thy people are called by thy name.

And whilst Daniel was thus praying and confessing his sins, and the sins of his people unto the Lord, and supplicating for his city Jerusalem; behold the angel Gabriel was sent unto him from the Lord, with the glad tidings, that God had heard his prayer for Jerusalem, and that it should be built, and the Lord would dwell in it.

O may we all thus fast and pray, as Daniel did, and may God Almighty give us such a return of our prayers, *Amen, O God, for Jesus Christ his sake: To whom*, &c.

SERMON IX.

General Directions for a Holy Life.

PHIL. iv. 8.

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

I Have, the two last Lord's-days, made it my business to treat of this text, in a way that I have thought did most tend to the informing your judgments: And to that purpose I have raised several observations, and drawn several inferences from it.

I mean now to treat of it in another way, and apply myself wholly to the pressing you to the practice of it.

And

And indeed, the nature of the ſermon I am to make, doth call for this from me. For I am now to take my leave of you; this being the laſt time, in all probability, that I ſhall preach among you as your miniſter: And therefore, I ſuppoſe, good advice and exhortation will more become me, at this time, than a cloſe diſcourſe upon a text.

And yet my text doth afford matter enough, without ſtraining it, for ſuch a purpoſe: Nor, indeed, do I know a text in the Bible, that I could more willingly pitch upon to leave with you as the laſt advice I would give you, and as the ſum and concluſion of my preaching among you; than theſe words of St. Paul, I have now read to you.

Let me therefore at this time, addreſs myſelf to you all, as the apoſtle here did at the concluſion of his epiſtle to the Philippians, *Finally, brethren, whatſoever things are true, &c.*

Here are many great things recommended by the apoſtle to our thoughts and purſuit. If we would make a diſtribution of them, I believe they will all naturally enough fall under theſe four heads: For the things here recommended, are not ſo many as the words by which they are expreſſed, there being ſeveral words uſed in this enumeration, that are of the ſame importance, and ſeem to expreſs much the ſame thing.

The four heads I would reduce them to, are theſe:

I. *A conſtant adherence to the true religion.*

II. *Honeſty and juſtice in our dealings,*

III. *A life of ſtrict purity, in oppoſition to ſenſuality and lewdneſs.*

IV. *The adorning the doctrine of God we do profeſs, by the conſtant practice of every other thing that is virtuous or commendable, or well thought of by mankind.*

This

This, as I take it, is a fair account of the parts of this text; and these I shall make the heads of my following exhortation.

I begin with the first: *Finally, my brethren, whatsoever things are true, think on those things.*

The truths that St. Paul here exhorts them to think on, are undoubtedly the truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which he had delivered to them. These he would have them to think upon, and persist in, and never to be prevailed upon by any temptation to depart from them.

Let me now apply this advice of his to you. It is the particular blessing of God to this kingdom, and an inestimable blessing it is, that he has not only vouchsafed us the light of his gospel for many years, but he has also taken care that the truths of it should be delivered to us with greater purity and sincerity, and freer from the mixtures of error than to most, I was going to say than to any, other people in the world.

If it lay in your way to make observations concerning the state of religion in other countries; nay, or but to read the accounts that are given of it; I am sure you would be convinced how exceedingly happy we of this church are, above all the churches in Christendom.

O therefore, let us all firmly adhere to the truths we have been taught; to the truths we have hitherto made profession of: And let us firmly adhere to that church which hath held forth these truths to us, and taught us this profession.

We do not pretend that any church is infallible, and therefore not ours: But this we dare say, and we can justify; that if we take our measures concerning the truths

truths of religion from the rules of the holy ſcriptures, and the platform of the primitive churches, the church of England is undoubtedly, both as to doctrine and worſhip, the pureſt church that is at this day in the world; the moſt orthodox in faith, and the freeſt on the one hand from idolatry and ſuperſtition, and on the other hand from freakiſhneſs and enthuſiaſm, of any now extant.

Nay, I do farther ſay, with great ſerioufneſs, and as one that expects to be called to account at the dreadful tribunal of God for what I now ſay, if I do not ſpeak in ſincerity, That I do in my conſcience believe, that if the religion of Jeſus Chriſt, as it is delivered in the New-teſtament, be the true religion (as I am certain it is:) then the communion of the church of England is a ſafe way to ſalvation, and the ſafeſt of any I know in the world.

And, therefore, I do exhort you all in the name of God, ſtedfaſtly to hold and to perſevere in this communion.

Here you have the things that are true. Think of them, and embrace them heartily; and live and die in the profeſſion of them. This is the doctrine I have always taught you, and by the grace of God, I mean to practiſe accordingly.

II. The next thing I have to recommend to you, from theſe words of the apoſtle, is univerſal honeſty and juſtice, and righteouſneſs in your converſation. *Whatſoever things* (ſaith he) *are true, whatſoever things are honeſt, whatſoever things are juſt; think on theſe things.*

You ſee I join thoſe two words honeſt and juſt together, as importing the ſame thing. Though yet I am aware that the word we here render honeſt, is often

ten used in another signification, that is to say, for grave or venerable: But since that other signification falls in most properly under my last head, I wave it here, and take the word as our translation renders it.

Indeed, it is vain to expect any advantage from our profession of the truth, if we be not sincerely just and honest in our actions.

Whosoever can allow himself in the practice of any dishonest, knavish, indirect dealing, let that man be never so orthodox in his belief and opinions, yet I am sure he is no true christian.

O therefore, let me exhort you all, whatever interests you have to serve; whatever dealings you are to engage in, to be always strictly just and upright in your conversation. Use no tricks, practise no ill arts for the serving your ends; but in all your transactions with men, deal with that simplicity and integrity and good conscience, that becomes those who would be accounted the disciples of him who was the most innocent, the most sincere, and the least intriguing person in the world.

Assure yourselves, no dishonesty can prosper long. Whatever turns you may serve by it at present, yet you will bitterly repent of it some time or other. But righteousness and justice doth establish a man's ways: And the upright man, though he is not always the richest, yet always walketh most surely. And as for the final event of things; remember this, that God Almighty has pronounced, that *no unrighteous* men, *no covetous, no lyars, no extortioners, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.* But to go on.

III. The next thing I have to exhort you to, from the words of my text, is the practice of purity. For after the apostle hath recommended the pursuit of things

things that are true, and the things that are honeſt and juſt, he next adds the things that are pure, meaning hereby, that we ſhould ſtudy to be pure, and chaſte, and temperate, both in our hearts and lives; avoiding all exceſſes, and lewdneſs, and ſenſuality.

And if he thought it convenient in that age of ſtrictneſs, and ſeverity, and devotion, to put the chriſtians in mind of this; I am ſure it is not only convenient, but neceſſary to do it, in this age of ours, when luxury and debauchery, when whoredom and drunkenneſs, and all ſorts of vices that are contrary to purity, are grown to that height among us, that we ſeem to defy God Almighty by our impudent practice of them, and provoke him to give us up to deſtruction.

I pray God make the whole nation deeply ſenſible of the folly and wickedneſs, as well as of the danger and dreadful conſequences of theſe practices. And as for you who are here preſent, let me beſpeak you in the words of the apoſtle; *dearly beloved, I beſeech you, as ſtrangers and pilgrims, to abſtain from fleſhly luſts, which war againſt the ſoul.* I beſeech you, as you have any honour for your Lord and Maſter, as you have any regard for the preſervation of a ſenſe of religion in your minds, as you have any concern for your health, for your eſtates, for your families; as you have any reſpect to the publick, that effeminacy, and ſottiſhneſs, and diſeaſes, may not be entailed upon our poſterity. Laſtly, as you love your own ſouls, and hope ever to ſee the face of God in heaven, learn to live ſoberly, learn to live chaſtely, learn to practiſe purity and temperance in all your converſation. Avoid whoredom and drunkenneſs, as you would the plague; for certainly they are the worſt of plagues to them that uſe them: For other plagues

do only put our bodies in danger, but these do endanger both our souls and bodies. Nay, as to the one (I mean our souls) they will prove certain inevitable destruction, without repentance and reformation.

I know these things are made slight matters of, by a great many among us: But assure yourselves, God will not account them so; it is certain he will not, if we may believe his word; for it is there told us expressly, that *whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.* And withal, *that neither adulterers, nor fornicators, nor unclean persons, nor drunkards, shall ever inherit the kingdom of God, or of Christ.*

IV. I proceed to the last head of advice, that is given in my text. The apostle having instanced in three things necessary to be daily thought upon and pursued by all christians, viz. truth, and honesty, and purity, leaves off to meddle any farther with particulars, and sums up the rest of his advice in generals. And that sum comes to this, That as we are christians, we should not only take care of the three forementioned things, but should make it our business to improve ourselves in every other sort of virtue; nay, in every other sort of thing that is praise-worthy, or that is well esteemed of among mankind. So that really it should be the endeavour of our lives, to render ourselves as excellent, and as exemplary for all sorts of amiable qualities, as it is possible for men to be in this world.

This I take to be the full meaning of those four expressions that follow in my text, *whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise; think on these things.*

And

And now, brethren, ſee from hence what your obligations are. You that have ſuch a glorious light vouchſafed you, ſuch unvaluable promiſes, ſuch mighty aſſiſtances made over to you by the goſpel of Chriſt; you muſt in reaſon imagine, that in return of theſe great advantages, great things are expected from you.

It will not ſatisfy your engagements, that you do believe and profeſs the goſpel; that you do no wrong to your neighbours; that you are neither given to lewdneſs nor drunkenneſs; (though yet even theſe, as the world goes, are very great things; and could all men that profeſs chriſtianity, truly ſay this of themſelves, we ſhould ſee heaven upon earth.) But your chriſtianity obliges you to aſpire after greater things: You muſt get yourſelves poſſeſſed of the whole circle of virtues; you muſt be kind and charitable, as well as juſt and honeſt; you muſt be modeſt and meek, and humble, as well as temperate and chaſte.

Nay, not only ſo, but you are to labour after all theſe ſeveral virtues in the full latitude and extent of them, even to that degree, that every thing which hath but the appearance of evil, is to be avoided by you. You are not only to abſtain from acts of injuſtice, but even from doing a hard thing to any one; you are not only to keep yourſelves within the known limits of temperance and chaſtity, but to avoid all thoſe things that border upon the vices oppoſite thereunto; and ſo as to all other inſtances: If any thing be of ill report, and looks infamouſly to the ſober part of mankind; why that very conſideration is enough to deter you from the practice of it: For you are to recommend your religion to all the men in the world, by all the ways that are poſſible.

In

In a word, you are to endeavour to be as free from blame in your whole converſation as you poſſibly can, and not only ſo, but to be as good, and to do as much good as your circumſtances will allow you.

This now is to be a chriſtian indeed; by thus endeavouring, you truly walk worthy of that high and heavenly calling wherewith you are called, and you do (as the apoſtle adviſes) adorn the doctrine of God in all things; and happy, extremely happy are they that do thus; for great is their reward: Great even in this world, in the ſolid peace and aſſurance of God's favour which they here enjoy, and which indeed far exceeds all the bleſſings that the earth can afford; but exceedingly great in the life to come, when Jeſus Chriſt ſhall come with all the powers of heaven to do honour to thoſe that have thus here honoured him.

Thus have I gone through all the parts of my text, but I do not think that I ought ſo to leave it. I have given you an account of the things that St. Paul hath here directed us to, to be the main purſuit of our lives. But I think likewiſe it will be proper to ſpeak ſomething of the methods of that purſuit, or the means which we are to obſerve, if we would practiſe this text; and here I am to begin anew with my advices. Several things I have to repreſent upon this occaſion, and to exhort you to. I am not much ſollicitous, whether they ſtrictly belong to my argument or no: But I deſire to leave them with you, as things that I judge to be very uſeful, and which I wiſh may be ever remembered by you.

And the firſt thing I would exhort you to, is this, *That you would endeavour to poſſeſs your minds with a hearty ſenſe of God Almighty, and the abſolute neceſſity of being ſeriouſly religious.*

I do

I do not mention this, as if I thought there was any need to caution you againſt atheiſm or infidelity; for I hope not many among us are inclined that way. Mankind are naturally diſpoſed to believe a God and religion; and ſince, through God's bleſſing, it is chriſtianity that is the religion of our country, and in which we have been all educated, I look upon an atheiſt or infidel among us, to be a ſort of prodigy, a ſtrange unuſual creature, vaſtly different from thoſe of his own kind.

But here is the thing: Though moſt of us profeſs religion, and the true religion, yet many of us have no lively or hearty ſenſe of it. We uſe religion, as we do our cloaths. They are very convenient, nay perhaps neceſſary, and therefore we wear them, and for the particular form or mode of them, we follow, as to that, the cuſtom of the country where we live. Yet as the cloaths we wear do not alter the complexion or features of our body, ſo neither doth the religion we profeſs, any more affect the temper of our ſouls. We ſerve ourſelves in both caſes of the outward conveniencies that are to be had by them, but we are ſtill the ſame perſons, both as to our outward and inward lineaments.

But, alas! this is a very ſorry way of being religious, and will do us no great kindneſs. We may perhaps reap ſome ſecular advantages by it, but yet even the very trouble and pains it puts us to, do equal the conveniencies we have from it. The men that live thus, are juſt ſerved like thoſe that work in rich mines; they are daily employed about gold and ſilver, or gems, and they work hard, and they have their day's wages for their labour; but they are not a whit the richer for the treaſures that come into their hands.

Your

Your religion will never ſerve you to any extraordinary purpoſes, till your hearts be affected with it as well as your underſtandings. Let me therefore adviſe you, as you love either your happineſs in this world or in the next, make it your principal care to get a lively and vigorous ſenſe of God impreſſed upon your minds; and look upon it as the greateſt intereſt you have to carry on, the greateſt buſineſs you have to do in this world (as it really is) to approve yourſelves to this God, by a ſincere endeavour in all your converſation, to walk as his Son Jeſus Chriſt hath taught you. If you do this, you will certainly find the ſweet and comfort of it both here and hereafter.

When all is ſaid, it is a vain thing for any man to expect a tolerable eaſy paſſage through this world, unleſs he have the hopes of God's favour to ſupport him under the multitude of evil accidents, which the ſtate of human life will neceſſarily expoſe him to. And as for the other world, without theſe hopes he is perfectly loſt: And to be able to entertain any rational hopes of God's bleſſing and favour, is a very vain thing likewiſe, unleſs we make it our buſineſs with our whole hearts and ſouls to ſerve and pleaſe and obey him.

There are a great many rules and maxims that we uſe to give to our friends or our children, for the making their fortunes; and I cannot deny but they are exceeding good ones. Thus for inſtance, we adviſe them to get a true underſtanding of their buſineſs, and to purſue it diligently; to keep out of ill company, to avoid drinking or gaming, and lewdneſs, and to ſtudy the tempers and humours of mankind, and to learn to apply themſelves dexterouſly to thoſe they have occaſion to converſe with; why theſe and ſuch

others

others are excellent rules, and moſt worthy of all men to be ſtudied and practiſed. But ſtill there is one rule above all theſe, and without which all the other will ſignify very little to the making a man's life eaſy and comfortable; and that is, to preſerve a lively ſenſe of God upon our ſpirits, to have his fear always before our eyes, to love him above all things, to value his favour more than life, and to dread his diſpleaſure as the worſt of evils. If we can but once get our ſouls into this frame, we have done our buſineſs both for this world, and for eternity; all the other particular rules and advices will be in a great meaſure ſuperfluous; for he that is poſſeſſed of this good principle, will of courſe naturally fall into the practice of them. And beſides this fear and love of God in our hearts, as it is the moſt effectual means, according to the uſual diſpoſition of the Divine Providence, to put us into good circumſtances of living; ſo it is the only means of making our circumſtances happy to us, if they be good; or of making them eaſy and ſupportable, if they be bad.

I do therefore moſt earneſtly recommend it to you, as you deſire that either you or yours may proſper; nay, as you would not be very miſerable, be not contented with a ſuperficial outſide religion, but affect your minds as deeply as is poſſible with a ſenſe of God, and what you owe to him; and endeavour to impreſs the ſame ſenſe upon your friends and children, and all that are about you. The truth of it is, ſo much doth our preſent happineſs, as well as our future, depend upon this belief of God, and love to him, and hopes of his favour; that were it not for this, the preſent world, with all the imaginary pleaſures and glories of it, would appear to all wiſe and good men, not only an empty, dull, unſatisfactory place, but a diſmal melancholy

lancholy priſon. If it was ſuppoſed, that all things here were the effects of blind chance or fatal neceſſity, and that there was no wiſdom and goodneſs that did preſide over the world, or took care of mankind; no conſidering man could deſire to live here.

The ſecond thing I would leave with you, is this, that after you have got into your minds a hearty ſenſe of God and his providence, and his preſence and goodneſs; ſo as that you mean to make it the buſineſs of your lives to recommend yourſelves to him; you would in the next place take care to keep up that ſenſe by a conſtant and daily worſhip of him.

For God's ſake, and for your own ſouls ſake, do not neglect your prayers. You muſt never think that God will bleſs you, if you do not make a conſcience of daily paying him your tribute of honour and worſhip.

Be ſure therefore, you be conſtant in your private devotions. As you every day receive the renewed pledges of God's love and goodneſs towards you in a thouſand inſtances; ſo let every day your affection and gratitude be expreſſed to him by hearty prayer and thankſgiving. This is abſolutely neceſſary to be done, as I have often told you, if you mean to preſerve any hearty ſenſe of religion in your minds.

But beſides this, I have another thing to recommend to all thoſe that have families: They are heads and governors of a ſociety. For, indeed, the firſt notion of ſociety is that of a family. Every family is a little kingdom; and every kingdom is, or ought to be, a great family. Now is it natural, is it decent, that there ſhould be any ſociety upon earth, wherein God ſhould not be owned and worſhipped? And yet, woe be to us, how many thouſands of families are there in this

this kingdom, nay, I am afraid even in and about this city, wherein God is not so much as named in public, unless, perhaps, by the way of affront, by the way of cursing or swearing?

We deservedly complain of the great looseness and profaneness and irreligion that hath overspread the face of this nation. O! I doubt a great deal of the blame of it lies upon the housholders, the masters of families among us. If they would take better care of their children and servants, and let them know what it is to worship God, things would not be so bad among us. But how can we expect better, when there is no religion either taught or practised in our houses? We give our domesticks opportunities enough of learning all our bad qualities; but we give them none of learning our good ones, if we have any.

They see us offending God by many rash words and sinful actions; but they do not see us repenting and asking God's pardon by our solemn prayers and applications to the throne of grace. Let us therefore seriously lay this point to heart. I am sure we have just cause to do it. Let us bring religion into our families, and not be contented, that once a week some of our people in their turns should hear something of it. Let us every day call our family together, and pay our common tribute of prayer and praise for the mercies we do daily receive in common.

Methinks our Saviour seemed to have a respect to this very duty, and to charge it mightily upon us, when he made us that gracious promise, that even *where two or three were gathered together in his name, there would he be in the midst of them.* Sure his words have most naturally a respect to the worship of God, that is performed in families; as hath likewise the very con-

contrivance of the Lord's prayer: All the petitions thereof being so framed, as to be most proper to be said by more than one, and yet too when we have shut our doors for that purpose. But,

Thirdly, as you ought to take care about the worship of God in your closets, and in your families; let me add, that it equally concerns you to frequent the more public worship of God in his own house. It is a bad sign of some very evil principle or other, for any man to be much a stranger there. Even to have the liberty and opportunity of worshipping God in public, is one of the greatest blessings and privileges that we can have in this world; and hath by good men always been so accounted. Now sure, if we have this notion of it, we shall think ourselves mightily concerned to take all opportunities that come in our way, not only on Sundays, but on other days, of resorting to the public assemblies, and joining with them in the solemn sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving; and thinking it a good day to us, wherein we have thus employed ourselves.

The sacrifices of this kind that we offer to God with an honest and devout mind, we cannot doubt will always find acceptance, and produce their effects; nay, perhaps, when our closet-prayers will not. For there are certainly more promises to public prayers, than to private ones. Though yet both are very good; nay, both are absolutely necessary. But to proceed:

Fourthly, being upon this argument of the means and instruments of religion, you may be sure I cannot omit the mentioning of another thing, as one of those points that I would most seriously recommend to you; and that is the solemn observation of the Lord's-day.

I am

I am not for laying ſtreſs upon the keeping of this day, or any other, more than the nature of the thing requires. I am ſenſible that the doctrine about the obſervation of the ſabbath, as it is delivered by ſome men, is ſuperſtitious enough, and oftentimes, where it is believed, proves rather a ſnare to mens conſciences, than of uſe to make them more religious. Far therefore am I from deſiring you to be nice and ſcrupulous about the punctilio's of the Lord's-day ſervice. The laws both of God and man have, in that matter, left a great deal to your own diſcretion, and the circumſtances you are in. But however, thus much is neceſſary, that every man who profeſſeth himſelf a chriſtian, ſhould bear a conſtant religious regard to the Lord's-day, by devoting it to ſpiritual uſes, more eſpecially the public worſhip of God.

I do not much doubt of the truth of the obſervation which ſome good men have made, viz. That a man ſhall proſper much better, both in his ſpiritual and temporal affairs, all the week after, for his careful obſervance of the Lord's-day. And I am likewiſe of opinion, that thoſe men have little or no ſenſe of religion, that make no conſcience of ſanctifying that day, or that put no difference between it and other days. Sure I am, were there nothing of a divine command for the ſetting apart this day to religious uſes, (which yet I believe there is;) yet it is one of the moſt prudent and uſeful conſtitutions that ever was made. So that even upon that account, all men that have any honour for God, or zeal for the public good, ſhould think themſelves obliged to obſerve it.

The benefits of it are indeed unſpeakable. Not to mention the civil or temporal conveniencies of it, in truth, to the keeping up the religion of this day, we

owe in a great measure, that the very face of christianity hath hitherto been preserved among us. And were it not for this, for any thing I know, most of us, in a very few years, would become little better than heathens and barbarians. And so great an influence towards the making men better, or at least, keeping them from growing worse, hath this practice always had; that you may observe the most profligate men among us, who for their wickedness come to an untimely end, do generally impute their falling into those sins which caused their death, to their breaking their sabbath, as they commonly express it. But,

Fifthly, Let me, upon this occasion, put you in mind of another thing, which by many of us is too much neglected; and that is, the taking all opportunities of coming to the holy sacrament.

I have often spoken to you about this matter, and I now desire to remind you of it. There are little hopes you will ever make any great progress in virtue and holiness, till you can bring yourselves to a frequent and constant participation in this holy mystery. Because, indeed, this is the solemn ordinance that Christ hath appointed for the conveying his grace to us, and enabling us to overcome our sins, and grow daily in virtue and goodness.

I know we have generally many and inveterate prejudices to this matter. But assure yourselves, they are meer prejudices, and no good reasons. Every man that means or designs honestly, and endeavours to lead his life as a christian ought to do, may certainly, with as little scruple, come every month to the communion, as he may come every week to say his prayers, or hear a sermon. Nay, and I say further, if a man do not so lead his life, that he may approach

to

to the ſacrament every month, nay, every week, nay, every day, if there be occaſion; I am afraid that he doth not live ſo, as to be fit for it, though he comes but once in a year, or once in ſeven years. For the dueneſs of your preparation doth not depend upon your ſetting aſide ſo many extraordinary days for the forcing yourſelves into a religious poſture of mind, but upon the plain natural frame and temper of your ſouls, as they conſtantly ſtand inclined to virtue and goodneſs. A man that ſeriouſly endeavours to live honeſtly and religiouſly, may come to the ſacrament at an hour's warning, and be a worthy receiver. On the other ſide, a man that lives a careleſs or a ſenſual life, may ſet apart a whole week, or a whole month, for the exerciſing repentance, and preparing himſelf for the communion, and yet not be ſo worthy a receiver as the other: And yet he may be a worthy receiver too, provided he be really honeſt and ſincere in the matter he goes about; and provided that he remember his vows afterward, and do not ſink again into his former ſtate of careleſneſs and ſenſuality.

But to return to my point. I do verily think that moſt of the doubts and fears and ſcruples that are commonly entertained among us, about receiving the ſacrament, are without ground or reaſon; and that every well-diſpoſed perſon, that hath no other deſign in that action, but to do his duty to God, and to expreſs his belief and hopes in Jeſus Chriſt, and his thankfulneſs to God for him, may as ſafely at any time come to the Lord's table, as he may come to church to ſay his prayers. And if the caſe be ſo, (as I believe it is) then of what a mighty privilege and benefit do they deprive themſelves, who, when they have ſo many opportunities, do ſo ſeldom join in that ſolemn inſti-

ſtitution of our Lord, which (as I ſaid) was deſigned for no other purpoſe, but to be the means of our growing in grace and virtue, in love to God, and to all the world.

O therefore, my brethren, let me beg of you not to be ſtrangers at the Lord's table. But I need not beg it of you; for I am ſure you will not, whenſoever it ſhall pleaſe God to put it into your hearts ſeriouſly to mind the concernments of your ſouls; and to be heartily ſenſible of the need you ſtand in of the grace of Chriſt for the leading a holy and pure life.

I have but one thing more in the ſixth place, to leave with you, and I have done. It is not indeed of the nature of thoſe things I have laſt recommended to you, that is, a means or inſtrument of growing more virtuous; but it is a principal virtue itſelf: And I do therefore recommend it to you, becauſe it is at all times uſeful, at all times ſeaſonable, but more eſpecially it ſeems to be ſo now; and that is, That you would walk in love, and ſtudy peace and unity, and live in all dutiful ſubjection to thoſe whom God hath ſet over you; and endeavour, in your public ſtations, to promote the public happineſs and tranquillity, as much as is poſſible: But by no means, upon any pretence whatſoever, to diſturb the public peace, or to be any way concerned with them that do; by no means ever to engage in any party or faction; and leaſt of all, any faction in religion which is grounded upon a ſtate-point.

I am ſorry the poſture of things among us gives me occaſion to mention this matter; but it is too viſible, to what a height our animoſities and diſcontents are grown; and what the conſequences of them may be, unleſs there be a timely ſtop put to them, I tremble to think.

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With mens differences as to their notions about politics, I am not concerned; let men frame what hypotheſes they pleaſe about government, though I do not like them, yet I do not think myſelf bound to preach againſt them: But when theſe differences are come to that paſs, that they threaten both the civil and eccleſiaſtical peace; there I think no miniſter ſhould be ſilent.

Church-diviſions, God knows we have, and have always had too many; but it is very grievous that thoſe who have always declared themſelves the friends of our church, and enemies to ſchiſm, ſhould, at this time of day, ſet a helping hand to promote a ſeparation.

And yet it ſeems to this height are our differences come. Some people among us, that formerly were very zealous for the eſtabliſhed worſhip of the church, are now, all of a ſudden, ſo diſtaſted with it, that they make a ſcruple of being preſent at our ſervice. Nay, ſome have proceeded ſo far as to declare, I know not upon what grounds, open war againſt us, and ſet up ſeparate congregations in oppoſition to the public.

What is the meaning of this? Hath ſchiſm and ſeparation from the eſtabliſhed worſhip, which heretofore was branded as ſo heinous a ſin, (and deſervedly too) ſo changed its nature all of a ſudden, that it is become not only innocent, but a duty?

Have we not the ſame government both in church and ſtate, that we formerly had? Have we not the ſame articles and doctrines of religion publicly owned and profeſſed and taught, without the leaſt alteration? Have we not the ſame liturgy, the ſame offices and prayers uſed every day, that have always been? What is there then to ground a ſeparation upon?

Yes, "But the names in the prayers are changed, "and we cannot pray for thoſe that are now in au- "thority, as we could for thoſe that were hereto- "fore."

But how unreaſonable is this, when St. Paul has bid us to put up prayers and ſupplications and inter- ceſſions for all men; eſpecially for kings, and all that are in authority. Doth he make any reſtriction, any diſtinction, what kings, or what perſons in authority we are to pray for, and what not? Doth he not ex- preſly ſay, we muſt pray for all men, and for all that are in authority? And doth not the reaſon of this exhortation imply as much, if his words did not? Namely, that we may lead quiet and peaceable lives, in all godlineſs and honeſty.

But I pray conſider what this doctrine leads to. If this principle be admitted to be good divinity, then farewel all the obligations to eccleſiaſtical communion among chriſtians: For what government is there in the world, that will not meet with ſuch ſubjects as are not ſatisfied with it? And if that diſſatisfaction be a juſt reaſon to break communion with the eſtabliſhed church, what ligaments have we to tie chriſtians to- gether? What will become of *holding the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace?* What is the conſe- quence of this, but endleſs ſchiſms and ſeparations?

But farther, I wiſh theſe perſons would conſider what an unaccountable humour it is to make a rent and ſchiſm in the church upon a meer point of ſtate.

Great revolutions have happened in all ages, and in all countries, and we have frequent inſtances of them in ſtory. But, I believe it will not be eaſily found, that ever any chriſtians ſeparated from the church, upon account of them. Still they kept unanimouſly

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to their doctrine and their worſhip, and never concerned themſelves farther in the turns of ſtate (how great ſoever they were) than peaceably to ſubmit to the powers in being; and heartily to pray to God, ſo to proſper their government, and direct all their affairs, that all their ſubjects might lead quiet and peaceable lives under them in all godlineſs and honeſty. But when in a revolution, a prince was advanced to the throne, that they looked upon to be a good man, and an encourager of the true religion; in that caſe they did not only readily ſubmit to him, but acknowledged it as the great bleſſing of God to them, that he had raiſed up ſuch a man to rule over them. This was the notion, and this was the practice of the primitive chriſtians as to this matter; I may, indeed, ſay of the chriſtians in all ages. And whatever you may have heard to the contrary, I doubt not to ſay, that this is the very doctrine of the church of England.

Let me therefore exhort all of you to be followers of peace; to promote public unity and concord, as much as is poſſible; to ſtudy to be quiet, and mind your own buſineſs; to be more concerned for your country and nation, than the intereſt of any ſingle man in it; heartily to ſubmit to the government; and not only ſo, but to thank God for the bleſſings you enjoy under it, and moſt earneſtly to pray for the continuance of them: Laſtly, Never to eſpouſe any party or faction againſt the government, nor ever to be driven away from the communion of the church, of which you have always profeſſed yourſelves members, by any of the pretences which ſome warm men may ſuggeſt to you. This I dare venture to ſay, how uneaſy ſoever ſome of you now may be in joining with our prayers, you will at laſt be ten times more uneaſy

in ſeparating from us. For faction has no bounds, and God knows whither it will lead a man at laſt. Were there nothing elſe but the heat and turbulency, the paſſion and peeviſhneſs, the bitter zeal and uncharitableneſs, that the being of a party doth naturally engage men in; I ſay, were there nothing elſe but this, no man that conſults the peace of his own mind, would for any conſideration leave the public communion, and eſpouſe the cauſe of a ſeparate intereſt. But there are worſe conſequences than theſe; and I pray God we may never feel them.

And now I have done with my exhortation. And I have ſpoke my thoughts very freely to you. And I hope you will receive what I have ſaid with the ſame kindneſs that I mean it. And truly, I have no reaſon to doubt of it, after ſo long an experience as I have had of your civility and candor. Indeed, during all the time that I have been among you (which hath been now near ſixteen years) I have been ſo kindly treated by you, and have received ſo many teſtimonies of your good-will, that I cannot but take this opportunity of publicly acknowledging my obligations to you, and returning you my ſolemn thanks for them.

I cannot indeed ſay, that I have done my duty as I ought; and I heartily beg of God to forgive all my defects: But I have this ſatisfaction, that I have ſincerely endeavoured, in all my preaching, to inſtruct you in the true doctrine of the goſpel, and to teach you the right way that leads to ſalvation. And I am ſo certain, that I have not been miſtaken myſelf, nor miſled you in that matter, that I dare with confidence addreſs myſelf to you in ſome of the words of the apoſtle, which do immediately follow after my text; viz. *Thoſe things which you have learned and received,*

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and heard from me, do; and the God of Peace shall be with you.

I shall ever bless God for that providence of his which placed me among you; and as I shall always and do earnestly desire all your prayers for me; so I shall always heartily pray for you; that God would guide and prosper you, that his good providence would always watch over you for good; that he would bestow upon you and your children after you, all sorts of blessings needful and convenient for you; and especially, that he would deliver you from every evil work, and preserve you to his heavenly kingdom,

This God of his infinite mercy grant, &c.

SERMON X.

Zeal for Religion, how to be govern'd.

ROM. X. 2.

For I bear them Record, that they have a Zeal of God, but not according to Knowledge.

THESE are St. Paul's words, and he ſpoke them of the Jews, thoſe unbelieving Jews, that were ſo tenacious of the traditions of their fathers, and ſo utterly averſe to any reformation of religion; that though it appeared by undeniable evidence, that Chriſt Jeſus was by God ſent into the world for that purpoſe; yet did they, to the laſt, ſtand out in their oppoſition of him and his goſpel, even to the final rejection of their nation.

To theſe people doth St. Paul in this chapter expreſs a great compaſſion, heartily wiſhing and praying for their converſion. *Brethren* (ſaith he in the firſt verſe) *my hearty deſire and prayer to God for Iſrael is, that they may be ſaved:* that is, that they may come to the knowledge of the truth in Chriſt Jeſus, and by that

that means obtain everlasting salvation. And one reason why he was thus concerned for them, he gives in the words following, which are the words I have read unto you: *For I bear them record* (saith he) *that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.* It was a great motive to him to be concerned for their happiness, that they were zealous for religion; though he knew at the same time, that the religion they were then so zealous of, was not the right religion; nor did the zeal they shewed for it, proceed from right principles.

According to the account I have now given of this passage, three things we may take notice of from it, viz.

I. The apostle's approving, and tacitly commending that zeal which his countrymen expressed for religion.

II. His meek and charitable behaviour towards them, even when their zeal for religion was very faulty and blameable.

III. His discovery of the faultiness of their zeal, which lay in this, *That it was not according to knowledge.*

These three things I shall take for the heads of my following discourse upon this text, and shall afterwards make such application of it, as the business of this day calls for.

I. First, I desire it may be observed, that zeal of God in general, that is, a hearty and passionate concernment for religion, the apostle here finds no fault with: On the contrary, he approves it as a commendable thing; for you see he represents it as a piece of virtue in his countrymen, and speaks it to their commendation, that they had a zeal of God; *I bear them record*

record (saith he) *that they have a zeal of God.* As much as to say, that he owned, they had that good quality, and they were to be commended for it; and for that reason, he both wisheth them well, and affectionately prayeth for them.

That which I would from hence take occasion to put you in mind of, is this; That indifference and unconcernedness for religion is not to have a place among any one's virtues and good qualities; it is rather a very great fault, howsoever it may sometimes pass for an instance of wisdom and prudence.

If indeed men had no passions, or had so mortified their passions, that they were rarely earnest or zealous about any thing; their unconcernedness for religion, and the things of God, might be the less reproveable. But when zeal and passion is more or less wrought in every man's temper, and the calmest men may be observed, on sundry occasions, not to be without it; it is an inexcusable fault to have no passion, no zeal for God and his cause.

How can a man answer it to his own conscience, to be heartily angry when an affront in word or deed, is done to himself; and yet to be altogether insensible when God is affronted in his presence; to make a mighty bustle, when his own right and property is at stake, though in never so small a matter; and yet to shew no concernment for the rights and the honour of that God who made him, and by whose favour alone it is that he can call any his own that he hath?

O! What a world of good might we all do, if we had a true zeal of God? How many occasions and opportunities are there put into our hands every day (in what condition or circumstances soever we are) which if we were acted by this principle, would ren-

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der us great benefactors to mankind, by discouraging vice and impiety, and promoting virtue and goodness in the world?

But perhaps I have set this business of zeal for God too high: Because none are capable of being thus zealous, but those that have attained to a great degree of virtue and piety, which we cannot suppose of all, nor the most. But however, it will be a shame to all of us, if we do not come to such a pitch of zeal which the unbelieving Jews are here commended for. *I bear them record* (saith St. Paul) *that they have a zeal of God.* What was this zeal of theirs? Why, as I told you, (and as it plainly appears from the whole chapter) it was an earnest and passionate concernment for the religion of their country. Sure all men among us, both good and bad, may come up to this degree of zeal for God, and it is a reproach to us if we do not. Especially considering that their religion, at that time, was not God's religion, but ours is.

Indeed, the public profession of religion in the right way, is as much every man's interest, and ought to be as much every man's care, as any the dearest thing he hath in this world. Nay, to all men that believe they have souls to save, it is more valuable than any other worldly privileges. It concerns us all, therefore, to be zealous in that matter. The duty we owe to God, to our country, and to ourselves, doth require it. In vain it is to be busy about other things, and to neglect this. A man will have but small comfort, when he comes to die, to reflect that he has been zealous of the privileges, and property, and rights of his countrymen; but it was indifferent to him, how the service of God, and the affairs of religion, were managed.

II.

II. The second thing we observe from this passage is, The apostle's carriage to the unbelieving Israelites, who, though they were zealous for God, yet were in a great mistake as to their notions of the true religion: He doth not bitterly censure them; he is not fierce nor furious against them; he doth not excite any person to use force or violence to them; but he rather pities them; he makes their zeal that they had of God, an inducement the more heartily to pray for them, that God would direct them in the right way that leads to salvation. Tho' he is far from approving their blind zeal, in so obstinately opposing the righteousness of God, that is, that method which God hath prescribed for the attaining of righteousness by the faith of Jesus Christ; and setting up a righteousness of their own, which consisted chiefly in observing the ceremonials of Moses his law, and the traditions of their fathers, as it follows in the next verse after my text: yet he thinks them the more pitiable, and the more excusable, in that this their opposition proceeded from their zeal of God, tho' it was misinform'd irregular zeal.

The practice and carriage of the apostle towards these ignorant zealots, ought to be a rule for us to walk by in the like cases. If men be of a different way from us as to religion; if they hold other opinions, or tho' they be of another communion from us; and tho' too we are sure they are mistaken; nay, and dangerously mistaken too; yet if they have a zeal of God, if they be serious and sincere in their way; if their errors in religion be the pure results of a misinformed conscience; let us, as the apostle here did, take occasion from hence to pity them, and to put up hearty prayers to God for them; and to endeavour all we can, by gentle methods, to reduce them to the

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right way: but by no means to expreſs contempt or hatred of them, or to treat them with violence and outrage. So far as their zeal is for God, let us ſo far ſhew tenderneſs and compaſſion to them; and if their zeal be in ſuch inſtances, as are really commendable, let us, in ſuch inſtances, not only bear with them, but propoſe them for our examples. This, I ſay, was the apoſtle's practice, and I think it is ſo agreeable to the ſpirit and temper of our great Lord and Maſter Chriſt, that it will become us, in like caſes, to act accordingly.

But then after I have ſaid this, theſe two things are always to be remembered:

Firſt, That our tenderneſs to miſtaken zealots, muſt always be ſo managed, as that the true religion, or the public peace ſuffer no damage thereby. And therefore, how kindly and compaſſionately ſoever, we, as private chriſtians, are to treat thoſe that differ from us, and purſue a wrong way out of conſcience; yet this doth not hinder, but that both wholeſome laws may be made, for the reſtraining the exorbitancies of miſtaken zeal; and, when thoſe laws are made, that they may be put in execution.

The conſideration of law-givers and magiſtrates, is different from that of private chriſtians. Their buſineſs is to ſee, *nequid detrimenti reſpublica capiat*, that the government be ſecured, that the common peace be kept, that the laws of God be obſerved, that God's religion, as it is deliver'd by Jeſus Chriſt, be preſerv'd ſincere and undefiled, and that the ſolemn worſhip of God, be purely and decently performed. And, therefore, there is no doubt, but that in all theſe matters the government may make fences and ſecurities againſt the inſults of intemperate zealots, and when

theſe fences are made, it ſhould be at their peril if they tranſgreſſed them, ſuppoſing magiſtrates did their duty. And all this, we ſay, is very conſiſtent with that tenderneſs and charity that all chriſtians, and even magiſtrates themſelves, in their private capacity, do owe to miſperſuaded erroneous conſciences.

And then, ſecondly, it is to be remembered, that that kindneſs and tenderneſs to miſtaken zealots, which we are ſpeaking of from the text, is not to be expreſſed to all alike; but to ſome more, to ſome leſs, to ſome, perhaps, in no degree at all; according as the nature and quality of their errors are, and according as the men that are guilty of them, may more or leſs, or not at all, be thought to have a real zeal of God, and to act out of principles of conſcience. Thus, for inſtance;

In the firſt place, thoſe that ſet up for patrons of atheiſm or epicuriſm; that make it their buſineſs in their converſation to expoſe all religion, and to bring it into contempt; that ridicule the profeſſors of it as a company of eaſy credulous men; that make no conſcience of blaſpheming God, and all things ſacred, as occaſion is given them: Why, theſe men may have zeal enough for their opinions, and we find that they often have a great deal too much; but are ſuch to be treated with that ſort of tenderneſs and compaſſion that we are now ſpeaking of? No, by no means; for they are quite out of the bounds of my text, they have a zeal indeed, but it is not a zeal for God, but for the devil, and the intereſts of his kingdom. And if one were to meaſure the greatneſs of crimes by the miſchief they do to human ſociety, I ſhould think that this ſort of people were not to expect ſo much favour and reſpect from mankind, as ſome other malefactors, that

that yet by our laws are to pay for their offences, at no leſs a rate than their lives.

Again, ſecondly, if there be any men that under a pretence of religion, do teach or encourage, or promote any ſort of vice or immorality; or whoſe principles do neceſſarily lead to debauch mens manners, in the plain matters of ſobriety, chaſtity, truth, or juſtice, and the like; ſuch kind of people are by no means objects of that tenderneſs and compaſſion that we are now ſpeaking of: For the laws of nature, as to moral virtue and vice, are ſo plainly writ in every man's heart, that he muſt be ſuppoſed to be an ill man that can eaſily entertain any principle (let it come ever ſo much recommended, under the name of religion) that contradicts them. And whatever allowance may in charity be made for a man's miſtakes, there is no reaſon that much ſhould be made for his wickedneſs.

Again, thirdly, if there be any men, that whilſt they expreſs a great zeal for the purity of religion, and exclaim againſt the corruptions of it (as they term them) which are introduced into the public eſtabliſhment, and turn every ſtone to have all things ſettled in another method; yet all this while, God and their own hearts know, that all this concernment and zeal of theirs for religion, though it make a great ſhew, is only pretended; and that there is another thing that lies at the bottom, that is to ſay, worldly intereſt, and dominion, and power, which they hope to compaſs by ſuch a regulation of matters as they deſire; I ſay, if there be any ſuch men, they are likewiſe no way concerned in that compaſſion my text ſpeaks of: For though they may be very zealous, yet it is a zeal for their own ſecular advantages that acts them, and not a zeal of God. If ſuch men could be known,

known, instead of being kindly and charitably thought of for their zeal in religion, the virtuous part of mankind would look upon them as the worst of hypocrites. But since God only knows the hearts of men, all such pretenders to zeal for religion, must, till we know them also, be treated according to the merits of the cause they pretend to be zealous for.

But then fourthly, and lastly, All that I have now said, is with respect to those that are out of the limits of my text, such as have no zeal of God, tho' some of them may pretend it: But then, as for those that really act out of principles of conscience, and have a real zeal of God, though in a wrong way; these are true objects of our tenderness and compassion, though yet in different degrees. For according as their principles and practices do more or less injure our common christianity, or are more or less dangerous to our government and constitution; in the same proportion, the greater or less tenderness and indulgence is to be expressed towards them. But most of what concerns this matter being already settled by law, I will not be so bold as to meddle in it; and therefore I proceed to the third head of my discourse.

III. The third thing I told you we might observe from this text, was this; the apostle's tacit reprehension of the Jewish zeal upon this account, that it was not according to knowledge.

The use I make of this is, that from hence we may be able to gather to ourselves a true rule for the governing our zeal in matters of religion, and likewise for the judging in others what zeal is commendable, and what is not.

For be our zeal of God never so great, yet if it be not a zeal according to knowledge, it is not the right

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chriſtian zeal. And though we ſee others never ſo fervent and vehement in purſuing a religious cauſe, and that too out of conſcience; yet if this zeal of theirs be not according to knowledge, it is a zeal that juſtly deſerves to be reproved. And though both we and they may, for our ſincerity in God's cauſe, expect ſome allowances, both from God and man, yet neither they nor we can juſtify it, either to God or man, that we are thus fooliſh and ignorantly zealous.

I wiſh this mark of right zeal, that it ought to be according to knowledge, were more conſidered: For it ſeems not often to be thought on by thoſe that are moſt zealous in their way, of what perſuaſion ſoever they be. This ſame buſineſs of knowledge is a thing that is moſt commonly forgot to be taken in as an ingredient or companion of zeal, in moſt ſort of profeſſors. For, as the world goes, thoſe men are generally found to be the greateſt zealots, who are moſt notoriouſly ignorant. Whereas true zeal ſhould not only proceed from true knowledge, but ſhould alſo be always accompanied with it, and governed by it.

But what is it to have a zeal according to knowledge? What doth this character of juſtifiable, right zeal contain in it? I anſwer, it muſt at leaſt contain in it theſe five following things;

Firſt, To have a zeal according to knowledge, doth import, that we be not miſtaken as to the matter of our zeal; that it be a good cauſe that we are zealous about. And ſince it is zeal for God that we are here ſpeaking of, it muſt be ſomething wherein our duty is concerned that muſt be the object of our zeal.

So that a right zeal for God implies, that we do ſo well inform ourſelves of the nature of our religion, as not to pretend a religious zeal for any thing that is

not

not a part of our religion. If our zeal for God be as it ſhould be, it muſt certainly expreſs itſelf in matters that are good; about ſuch objects as God hath made to be our duty. *It is good* (ſaith St. Paul) *to be always zealouſly affected in a good matter.* But if we miſtake in our cauſe, if we take that for good which is evil, or that for evil which is good, here our zeal is not according to knowledge.

Secondly, As the object of our zeal muſt be according to knowledge, ſo alſo the principle from whence our zeal proceeds, muſt be according to knowledge alſo: That is to ſay, we muſt have ſolid and rational grounds to proceed upon in our concernment for any thing; ſuch as will not only ſatisfy ourſelves, but all others that are unbyaſſed: In a word, ſuch as we can juſtify to all the world.

If it be every man's duty (as St. Peter tells us it is) *to be ready to give an anſwer to every one that aſketh him a reaſon, or of the hope that is in him:* Then I am ſure, it is much more every man's duty to be able to give a reaſon of the zeal that is in him. Becauſe this buſineſs of a man's zeal doth more affect the public, and is of greater concernment to it, than what a man's private faith or hope is.

But yet how little is this conſidered by many zealous men among us? Some are zealous for a point to ſerve an intereſt or a faction. But this is not to be owned as the ground and reaſon of zeal; for indeed, if it ſhould, it would not be allowed of. Others are zealous, for no other reaſon, but becauſe they find their teachers, or thoſe they moſt converſe with, are ſo. They follow the common cry, and examine no more of the matter. Others indeed have a principle of zeal beyond all this; for they are moved from

within,

within, to ſtand up for this or the other cauſe; they have impulſes upon their minds which they cannot reſiſt: But that, in truth, is no more a juſtifiable ground of any man's zeal, than either of the former. For if theſe motions and impulſes that they ſpeak of be from God, there will certainly be conveyed along with them, ſuch reaſons and arguments for the thing that they are to be zealous about, as will, if they be declared, ſatisfy and convince all other reaſonable men, as well as themſelves. For it is a ridiculous thing to imagine, that God at this day, doth move or impel men in any other way, than what is agreeable to the reaſon of mankind, and the rule of his holy word. And if the man's zeal can be juſtified by either of theſe, there is no need of vouching inſpirations for it.

Thirdly, As the zeal which is according to knowledge, hath a good matter for its object, and proceeds from a right principle; ſo it is alſo regular as to the meaſures of it. He that hath it, is careful that it doth not exceed its due bounds, as the ignorant zeal often doth; but he diſtinguiſheth between the ſeveral objects he is zealous for, and allows every one of them, juſt ſo great a concernment as the thing is worth, and no more. If the thing be but a ſmall matter, he is but in a ſmall meaſure concerned for it: If it be of greater moment, he believes he may be allowed to be the more earneſt about it. But he looks upon it as a raſh and fooliſh thing, and an effect of great ignorance or weakneſs, to be hot and eager for all things alike. We ſhould account him not many degrees removed from a child or an Idiot, that upon the cut of a finger, ſhould as paſſionately complain and cry out for help, as if he had broken a limb: Why juſt the ſame folly and childiſhneſs it is, to make a mighty buſtle about

ſmall

ſmall matters, which are of no conſequence, in which neither religion, nor the public peace, are much concerned; as if, indeed, our lives and ſouls were in danger. It therefore becomes all prudent and ſober men to take care, that their zeal do not ſpend itſelf in little things; that they be not too paſſionate and earneſt, and vehement for things that are not worth much contending for. If we lay a greater weight upon a cauſe than it will bear, and ſhew as much warmth and paſſion for ſmall matters, as if the fundamentals of our faith were at ſtake, we are zealous indeed, but not according to knowledge.

Fourthly, The zeal that is according to knowledge is always attended with hearty charity. It is not that bitter zeal which the apoſtle ſpeaks of, which is accompanied with hatred and envy, and perverſe diſputings: But it is kind, and ſociable, and meek, even to gainſayers. It is that *wiſdom which is from above, that is firſt pure, then peaceable, gentle and eaſy to be intreated.* It is a zeal that loves God and his truth heartily, and would do all that is poſſible to bring honour and advancement to them: But at the ſame time it loveth all men. And therefore in all things where it expreſſes itſelf, it purely conſults the merits of the cauſe before it, but lets the perſons of men alone. It is a certain argument of an ignorant and ungovern'd zeal, when a man leaves his cauſe and his concernment for God's glory, and turns his heat upon thoſe that he has to deal with; when he is peeviſh and angry with men that differ from him: When he is not contented to oppoſe arguments to arguments, and to endeavour to gain his point by calm reaſoning; but he flies into rage and fury; and when he is once tranſported herewith, he cares not what undecent bitter reflections he

makes

makes upon all thoſe that have the fortune to be of a different ſide. But in theſe caſes men would do well to remember, that the *wrath of man worketh not the righteouſneſs of God*, as the apoſtle expreſſes it. All this kind of behaviour ſavours of the wiſdom of this world, which is earthly, and ſenſual, and deviliſh.

Fifthly and laſtly, Another inſeparable property of zeal according to knowledge is, that it muſt purſue lawful ends by lawful means; muſt never do an ill thing for the carrying the beſt cauſe. This St. Paul hath laid down, as a rule, to be eternally obſerved among chriſtians, when in the third of the Romans he declares, that their *damnation is juſt, who ſay, let us do evil, that good may come.* Be therefore our point never ſo good, or never ſo weighty, yet if we uſe any diſhoneſt, unlawful arts, for the gaining of it; that is to ſay, if we do any thing, which is either in itſelf evil, and appears to be ſo by the natural notices of mankind, or which the laws of our holy religion do forbid: I ſay, in all ſuch inſtances we are tranſgreſſors. And tho' our cauſe be very good, and our ends very allowable; yet ſince the means by which we would accompliſh thoſe ends are unwarrantable, the whole action, tho' proceeding from never ſo much zeal for God, is very bad. For true zeal, as it always ſuppoſeth a right information of judgment, as to the matter of it, ſo likewiſe it ſuppoſeth, that a man ſhould act in honeſt ways, and endeavour to attain his ends by lawful means.

And thus have I laid before you the properties and characters of that zeal which is according to knowledge, which was the third and laſt thing I propoſed upon this text; and I pray God we may always remember them, whenever we have occaſion to expreſs

preſs a zeal for any thing, eſpecially in matters of religion. All that remains now is, to make ſome brief application of my text, with reference to the buſineſs of the day.

Theſe words, as I told you, were ſpoke of the Jews. But the character here given of them, doth ſo well fit a ſort of men, whoſe fiery zeal for God and their religion, gave occaſion to the ſolemnity of this day; that it looks as if it were made for them. It is the bigots of the church of Rome that I mean; to whom we muſt do the ſame right that St. Paul here did his countrymen: We muſt *bear them record, that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.*

Zealous they are ſufficiently, as the Jews were, no body doubts of it: But as for their zeal's being according to knowledge, there is great reaſon to doubt, they are as faulty in that point, as St. Paul's countrymen were. Indeed, if you were to draw the compariſon between the jewiſh and popiſh zealots, as to all the ſeveral particulars that our Saviour and St. Paul take notice of as inſtances of blind zeal in the former, you will find in all thoſe particulars, both their zeals to be much of a piece, not only as to the fervour, but as to the blindneſs of them.

Was it an inſtance of ignorant zeal in the Jews, that they ſet up their traditions to the diſparagement of the law of God? I pray, who are thoſe that diſparage the holy ſcriptures, by ſetting their traditions upon an equal foot with them?

Were the Jews to be blamed for that they were ſo zealous for their old religion, as to oppoſe that reformation of it which our Lord Jeſus endeavoured to introduce among them, becauſe they thought it was an innovation? I pray, who are thoſe, who, upon

that very ground, oppose all reformation at this day, tho' yet the wisest and best men among themselves are sufficiently sensible, that there are great corruptions both in their doctrine and worship?

Was it a fault in the jewish zeal, that it placed religion too much in ceremonies and formalities, in washing cups and platters, in tything mint and cummin, and the like, to the neglect of the weightier matters of the law, justice, and mercy, and faith? I pray, wherein is image-worship, invocation of saints, penances, pilgrimages, the use of reliques, holy water, &c. I say, wherein are these things better than those? And yet we know who they are that lay so great a stress upon these, and such other things, that it may be truly said, a great part of their religion is made up of them.

It would not be difficult to run the parallel between the zeals of the two religions through several more instances; but it is an unpleasant argument, and therefore I will pursue it no farther.

Only one instance more of the jewish zeal I must not pass by, because it comes up so fully to the business of this day.

So zealous were they for their religion, that they did not care what sort of means they made use of for the promoting of it, were they never so wicked and unnatural. Our Saviour they hunted to death with false witnesses; Stephen they stoned, out of pure zeal, in a popular tumult; forty of them solemnly bound themselves under a curse, that they would neither eat nor drink, till they had killed St. Paul: But all this, and a great deal more, our Saviour had foretold they would do, when he told his apostles, that *the time would come, when whosoever killed them, should think*

that he did God good service. A bleſſed way of doing God ſervice this is, to act ſuch wicked inhuman things as theſe! But ſuch inhuman things as theſe doth a blind zeal for religion ſometimes put men upon. And that it doth ſo, we cannot have a greater proof (except what I have already mentioned) than the practices of the zealous men of the church of Rome.

How many unlawful arts have they uſed to ſubject all the chriſtian world to their lord and maſter? How many forgeries for this purpoſe have they been the authors of, and maintained them afterwards? How many diſturbances have they given to the peace of Chriſtendom, in the moſt unjuſt and unnatural ways, for the advancement of the papal cauſe? It was out of zeal for God's ſervice, and the intereſt of holy church, that ſo many princes have been excommunicated and depoſed; that ſo many tumults and rebellions have been raiſed; that ſo many cruſado's for the extirpating heretics, have been ſent out: By which, and ſuch like means, it may juſtly be computed, that as much chriſtian blood has been ſhed for the eſtabliſhing popery, as it now ſtands, nay, and a great deal more, than ever was during all the times of the heathen perſecutions for the ſupporting of paganiſm.

But if there were no other inſtance extant in the world, to ſhew what is to be expected from a blind zeal, eſpecially a blind popiſh zeal for religion, that inſtance, which the deliverance of this day doth give us occaſion to mention, would be alone ſufficient to inform us: When, for no other end, but for the advancement of popery, and the rooting out that peſtilent hereſy of the reformation, which infeſted theſe northern climates, a company of popiſh zealots enter'd upon the moſt barbarous and inhuman project that ever

ever was undertaken by men: even neither better nor worse, than the destroying the king and parliament at one blow; and had put all things in such a readiness in order thereunto, that they certainly had effected it as on this day, had not their conspiracy been detected in a wonderful manner.

But thanks be to God, their designs then, and ever since, have been defeated, and some of them even miraculously; and we trust in the mercies of God that they will ever be so.

God hath been wonderfully gracious to us in the preservation of our church and religion, from popish attempts to destroy it, ever since it was settled among us.

How many plots and conspiracies were laid in the time of the glorious queen Elizabeth, to put an end to her life, and with it to our reformed establishment?

What a dreadful one was this of the Gunpowder-treason, in the reign of her successor?

How many dangers have threatened us since that time, from that quarter?

What a horrible storm, but of late, did we apprehend, and justly enough too, was impending over us?

And yet, blessed be God, (who hath never failed to raise up deliverers to his people in the day of their distress) that storm is blown over: And we are here, not only in peace and quietness, in the full possession of our native rights and liberties, and in the enjoyment of the free exercise of our religion (which is one of the most desirable things in the world.) But such is the deliverance that God hath wrought for us, that we also seem to have a fair prospect of the continuance of these blessings among us; and, according to human estimate, to be, in a good measure, out of the

danger of our old inveterate enemy, popery I mean; which, one would think, had now made its laſt effort among us.

Is not this now a great bleſſing? And muſt not all ſincere proteſtants (of what perſuaſions ſoever they be in other reſpects) neceſſarily believe ſo? Certainly they muſt, if they think it a bleſſing to be *delivered out of the hands of our enemies*, and to be in a condition to ſerve God without fear.

Let us all therefore own it as ſuch to God Almighty; let us thankfully remember all his paſt deliverances from popery, and eſpecially, let us never forget thoſe of this day; neither the former, nor this late one.

We have reaſon to believe, that God hath a tender care of his church and religion in theſe kingdoms, not only becauſe he hath ſo many times ſo ſignally and wonderfully appeared for the preſervation of it; but more eſpecially, becauſe we know and are convinced, that our religion is according to his mind and will; being no other than that which his Son Jeſus Chriſt taught unto the world; that is to ſay, no other than that which is in the bible, which is our only rule of faith.

It infinitely concerns us all, therefore, ſo to behave ourſelves, as to ſhew, that we are neither unthankful for God's paſt mercies, nor unqualified for his future protection.

And in order to that, I know no other way but this, that we all firmly adhere to the principles of our religion; and that in our practices we conform ourſelves to thoſe principles; that is to ſay,

In the firſt place, That we ſincerely love, and fear God, and have a hearty ſenſe of his preſence, and goodneſs, and providence, continually abiding in our

minds: that we truſt in him, depend upon him, and acknowledge him in all our ways: that we be careful of his worſhip and ſervice, paying him the conſtant tribute of our prayers and praiſes, and thankſgiving, both in public and private.

And then, ſecondly, That we be pure and unblameable in our lives; avoiding the *pollutions that are in the world through luſt:* And exerciſing chaſtity and modeſty, meekneſs and humility, temperance and ſobriety, amidſt the ſundry temptations we have to conflict with.

And, thirdly, That we have always a fervent charity to one another; *that we love as brethren*; endeavouring to do all the good we can, but doing harm to none. Uſing truth and juſtice, and a good conſcience in all our dealings with mankind. *Living peaceably, if it be poſſible, with all men.* And not only ſo, but in our ſeveral places and ſtations, promoting peace, and unity, and concord among chriſtians, and contributing what we can to the healing the ſad breaches and diviſions of our nation.

And then, laſtly, That we pay all ſubmiſſion and duty and obedience to the king and queen, whom God hath ſet over us; endeavouring in all the ways that are in our power, to render their government both as eaſy to themſelves, and as acceptable to their ſubjects, and as formidable to their enemies, as is poſſible.

If all of us, that call ourſelves proteſtants, would charge ourſelves with the practice of theſe things, how aſſured might we reſt that God would bleſs us; that he would continue his protection of our nation, our church, our religion, againſt all enemies whatſoever, and that we might ſee our Jeruſalem ſtill more and more to flouriſh, and peace to be in all her borders!

May God Almighty pour upon us all the Spirit of his grace, and work all these great things in us, and for us: And in order hereunto, may he send down his blessings upon the king and queen, and so influence and direct all their councils, both public and private, that all their subjects may be happy in their government, and *lead peaceable and quiet lives under them in all godliness and honesty*. And after such a happy and peaceable life here, may we all at last arrive to God's eternal kingdom and glory, through the merits of his dear Son, *To whom*, &c.

SERMON XI.

Of our SAVIOUR's Appearance.

HEB. ix. 26.

Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

THIS text doth naturally suggest five things to be insisted on, most of them proper for our meditations on this day, which therefore I shall make the heads of my following discourse.

I. In general, the appearance of our Lord. *Now hath he appeared.*

II. The time of that appearance. *In the end of the world.*

III. The end and design for which he appeared, *To put away sin.*

IV. The means by which he accomplished that end. *By the sacrifice of himself.*

V. The difference of his ſacrifice from the jewiſh ones. His was but once performed; theirs were every day repeated. If his ſacrifice had been like theirs; then (as you have it in the former part of the verſe) *muſt he often have ſuffered ſince the foundation of the world: But now once in the end of the world, hath he appeared, to put away ſin by the ſacrifice of himſelf.* This is the juſt reſolution of the text into its ſeveral particulars, of each of which I ſhall diſcourſe as briefly and practically as I can.

I. I begin with the firſt, The appearance of our Lord in general. *Now hath he appeared.*

Let us here conſider, firſt, who it was that appeared. And then, how he did appear.

The perſon appearing we will conſider both as to his nature, and as to his office.

He that appeared, as to his nature, was God and man; both theſe natures were united in him, and made one perſon. He was *God with us.* So the angel ſtiles him in the firſt of St. Matthew.

He was *the word that was with God, and was God, and by whom all things were made.* He was, I ſay, that *word made fleſh, and dwelling among us:* So St. John ſtiles him in the firſt of his goſpel.

Laſtly, He was *God manifeſted in the fleſh*; ſo St. Paul ſtiles him in the firſt epiſtle to Timothy.

This was the perſon that the text ſaith, now appeared; that is, the Son of God in human nature. God, of the ſubſtance of his Father, begotten before all worlds; and man, of the ſubſtance of his mother, born in the world. Perfect God, and perfect man, and yet but one perſon. For as the reaſonable ſoul

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and the body make one man; so here God and man make one Christ; as our creed expresses it.

And this leads me to his office. This divine person God-man, that the text here saith appeared, was, by his office, the Christ the Messias, that is, that great minister of God, that anointed king, and priest, and prophet, which, from the beginning of the world, he promised to send down upon earth for the salvation of mankind; who was believed in by the patriarchs; typified by the law; foretold by all the prophets; shadowed out in all the œconomy of the Jewish nation; expected by all the Israelites; and wished for by the best of the heathen world.

This person invested with the office, at last appeared; and in what manner, you all know from his story in the gospel.

He was, by the holy Spirit of God, conceived in the womb of a virgin, as was foretold of him by the prophets; of which an angel of the highest order in heaven, first brought the hapy tydings to the virgin herself.

This virgin, by as strange a providence, when the time of her delivery drew near, was brought from her own city and habitation in Galilee, to Bethlehem, a city of Judah, where she brought forth this illustrious babe; and thereby fulfilled another prophecy concerning him; namely, That he should be born in Bethlehem, which also the Scribes at that time acknowledged.

The circumstances, indeed, of his birth, were far from any outward pomp and magnificence. The virgin his mother was poor, and a stranger, and ill-befriended; that in the confluence of people, with which the city was then crowded, she was able to procure no

better a lodging than the ſtable of an inn: So that a manger was the place that firſt received the Lord of glory. This ſlur, this affront God then thought fit to put upon all that external ſplendor and grandeur, which uſually doth ſo much dazzle the eyes of mortal men.

But God failed not to make abundant amends for the meanneſs of his birth, by giving ſundry other demonſtrable evidences of the dignity of the perſon that was then born.

For the Magi from the Eaſt (princes ſhall I call them, or philoſophers?) being conducted by a new ſtar, came and paid their homage, and brought their offerings to this king of the world in a manger: And the ſhepherds, that were watching the flocks in the fields by night, were ſurprized with the glory of the Lord ſhining round about them, and an angel that thus ſpoke to them; *Fear not, for behold I bring you tydings of great joy, which ſhall be to all people; for unto you is born, this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Chriſt the Lord. And this ſhall be a ſign unto you, ye ſhall find the babe wrapped in ſwadling cloaths, lying in a manger. And ſuddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly hoſt, praiſing God, and ſaying, glory to God in the higheſt, on earth peace, good-will towards men.*

After this manner was the appearance of our Saviour, and much after the ſame manner was his following life. It was a life of much poverty and meanneſs as to outward circumſtances; but it was a life in every period of it, fraught with wonders. Whether we conſider the admirable goodneſs and charmingneſs of his temper; or the exemplary virtue and piety that did ſhine out in all his converſation; or the divinity

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of his ſermons and doctrines; or his prodigious inimitable miracles; or the atteſtations that were given him from heaven; or the uſage he received from men; or the events which followed upon all theſe things in the world.

But it is his firſt appearance in the fleſh, that we are this day met together to commemorate. And never had mankind ſo noble an argument given them to exerciſe their thoughts and meditations upon.

If we conſider the quality of the perſon appearing, that he was no other than the eternal Son of God; how ought we to be wrapt with wonder and aſtoniſhment, at the infiniteneſs of the divine condeſcenſion? How ought we to be affected with love and thankfulneſs, at ſuch a never-to-be paralleled inſtance of God's kindneſs to us, that he ſhould *ſo love us, as to ſend his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.*

If we conſider that this Son of God reſolving to appear in the world, of all other ways choſe to do it in our fleſh, and ſo united both the Deity and humanity in one perſon: O what a ſenſe ought this to impreſs upon us, of the honour that is here done to our nature, and the dignity it is advanced to? And how ought that ſenſe either to fright us, or to ſhame us from proſtituting this our nature, to any vile unworthy mixtures and communications, which God did not diſdain to take into ſo near a relation to himſelf?

If we conſider that this God, in human fleſh, came as the Meſſiah, the Saviour of the world, ſo long before promiſed, and ſo long expected; how ought this to fill our hearts with joy and thankfulneſs? How ſhould it move us to pour out our ſouls in benedictions to God, for having thus viſited and redeemed his people? And

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putting us into that dispensation, which so many holy men, for so many ages, wished to see, but did not see it; nay, and which the angels themselves desired to look into? and which the Jews for rejecting, at the time it was published, are to this day a standing monument of God's displeasure and vengeance?

If we consider the many evidences that this our Saviour gave at his appearance, of his being the true Christ; how exactly in all the circumstances of his nativity, and all the passages of his life, he fulfilled the prophecies which went before of him; and how convincing the testimonies were, which God gave to the truth of his mission: How ought this consideration to strengthen our faith in this Christ? To make us constant to the death, in owning him for our Saviour, our Messiah, in opposition to all the pretences of the Jews, and infidels, and atheists, and scepticks, to the contrary.

Lastly, If we consider the mean circumstances that this our Christ chose to appear in; so far below the dignity of so great a prince, that there is not the poorest beggar's child among us, but generally finds better accommodation, when it comes into the world; O what a check, what a rebuke ought this to be to that spirit of ambition, and pride, and vain-glory, that too often possesses us poor mortals? How ought it to take off our admiration, and lessen the too great esteem we are apt to have of all outward pomp and greatness? Nay, and to make us despise all the glittering shews and bravery of the world: Since God has given us so visible a demonstration, by the sending his own Son into it, how little a value he sets upon these things. But,

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II. I proceed to the second point, which my text leads me to speak to, and that is the time of our Saviour's appearance here mentioned, *Once hath he appeared in the end of the world.*

You see here, that the time of his appearance is said to be the end of the world. But how is that to be understood? If we take the expression in the literal sense, and as we commonly use it, the thing is not true: For there have already passed full seventeen hundred years since our Saviour's appearance: and yet the end of the world is not come, nor do we know when it will.

But there will be no difficulty in this matter, if we carefully attend to the phrase the apostle here useth, and interpret it according to the propriety of the language in which it is delivered. The word in my text is, Συντέλεια τῶν αἰώνων, which every body, that is versed in the style of the New-testament, knows may be better and more naturally rendered the consummation or conclusion of the ages, than the end of the world.

For the understanding this phrase, we must have recourse to the known idiom of the Jews, who used to speak of the several œconomies and dispensations, under which the world successively had been, or was to be, as of so many Αἰῶνες, or ages. The last of which ages, and the accomplishment and completion of all of them, they held to be the age of the Messiah, beyond which they knew there was to be no other age or œconomy. With reference to this way of speaking, the times of the gospel-dispensation are frequently called in scripture the *last times*, the *last days*, the *fulness of the times*, and in the text, the *consummation*, or shutting up of the ages. The meaning of all which

which phraſes is no more than this, That the times of the goſpel, that is, the appearance and revelation of our Saviour; though God intended them from the beginning, yet ſhould they be the laſt of all times. There ſhould be ſeveral diſpenſations ſet on foot in the world before they came; and when thoſe times were fulfilled, when the ends of thoſe diſpenſations were accompliſhed, then ſhould our Saviour appear, and begin his kingdom, which ſhould never be ſucceeded by any other.

This is the true meaning of Chriſt's appearing, ἐν Συντελείᾳ τῶν αἰώνων, as the text expreſſeth it, that is, not (as we tranſlate it) in the end of the world, but in the laſt of the ages, or at the time when the ages were fulfilled and accompliſhed.

Now what uſe we are to make of this conſideration, the apoſtle himſelf doth fairly intimate to us in the beginning of this epiſtle: *God*, ſaith he, *who at ſundry times, and in divers manners, ſpake in times paſt unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in theſe laſt days ſpoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath made heir of all things, and by whom he made the worlds.* And ſo he goes on, to ſet forth the incomparable dignity and pre-eminence of this laſt meſſenger of God, above that of either angels or men, by whom he had ſpoken to mankind before. But what is the inference he draws from all this? Why, that you may ſee in the beginning of the ſecond chapter, *We ought therefore* (ſaith he) *to give the more earneſt heed to the things we have heard* (that is to ſay, the doctrine of the goſpel) *leſt at any time we let them ſlip. For if the word ſpoken by angels was ſtedfaſt, and every tranſgreſſion and diſobedience received a juſt recompence of reward; how ſhall*

we

we escape, if we neglect so great salvation as was spoken to us by the Lord Jesus?

The apostle's argument here proceeds on this manner. God's revelation of his will to mankind, and the discovery of his grace and goodness, was not all at once, but gradual and by parts.

He first spake to mankind by the patriarchs, who were burning and shining lights in their generations.

He afterwards singles out the nation of the Jews, to be his peculiar people, and to them he gives a written law, which was delivered to them *by angels in the hand of Moses their mediator* (as the apostle speaks in the third of the Galatians) which law was a shadow, or dark representation of the good things which were afterwards to be revealed.

After this he sends prophets in a continual succession for several ages, who do more clearly discover God's will to them; who call upon them to holiness and virtue; and who speak in very plain terms of that great salvation which God should one day manifest to the world.

And last of all, as the Lord of the vineyard, in the parable, dealt with his husbandmen, who after he had sent servants, one after another, of different qualities and degrees, at last sent out his own Son: So, at last, I say, did the great Lord of the world, *when the fulness of the time was come*, send his own Son to be his embassador to mankind; his own Son, who was the *brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.*

If now, as the apostle here argues; if under the former dispensations, when God only declared his will by angels or by prophets, he was yet so severe, that no transgression or disobedience escaped, without a just recompence

compence of vengeance; *how can we escape, if we neglect so great salvation*, as that was, which in these last days, was preached by Jesus Christ? How can we escape, if these last and greatest methods of God for our good, and in which all the treasures of his goodness are displayed; I say, if these have no effect upon us, in order to the making us both holy and happy?

What teachers, what instructers can we further expect? What new lights or assistances do we yet wait for? Can any one think that God should set on foot some other new dispensation, for the bringing off those wretched people, upon whom this last could prevail nothing? Do we dream of another covenant, or another mediator between God and man, besides Christ Jesus? Do we fansy that God will send some other embassador, or saviour, into the world, after he hath sent his own Son? Or that the Son of God will come a second time in human flesh, and again be crucified for us?

No, certainly, God hath afforded the last and greatest means for man's salvation, and no other is ever to be expected. *Christ hath once appeared in the end of the world to put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself*; and to those that believe in him, and love him, and obey him, *will he appear the second time to their salvation.* But never will he appear again to make a new reconciliation for those men, that are not reconciled to God by his first appearance. To such (as our apostle speaks in the tenth chapter) *there remains no more sacrifice for sin, but a fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation to consume the adversaries.*

III. The third general point I am to insist on from the text, is the end of our Saviour's appearance; and

that

that is here said to be the *putting away of sin*; *once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin.*

This is that which the scripture every where assigns as the business and design of Christ's coming. To run over all the particular texts would be tedious in so plain a case. I shall therefore only name one or two.

This is the account that St. John gives of his appearance, 1 epist. chap. iii. *Ye know*, saith he, *that he was manifested to take away our sins.*

And again, this is the account that the angel gives to Joseph, a little before his birth, Matt. i. 20. *Fear not* (saith he) *to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins.* He was called Jesus, because he was designed by God to be our Saviour; for so much that word imports. And he is therefore our Saviour, because he saves his people from their sins, which is in the words of the text, *to put them away.*

But what is it to be saved from our sins, or to have our sins put away? Since the salvation we have by Christ doth consist in this, it is fit we should a little more particularly insist on it. In answer therefore to this question, we say, that two things are implied, in Christ's putting away sin.

First, His saving or delivering us from the guilt of our sins, and the punishment due to them.

Secondly, His saving or delivering us from the power and dominion of them.

In these two things consists the salvation obtained for us by Jesus Christ, and if either of them was wanting, or was not effected, he would not be a compleat Saviour.

First,

First, Christ appeared to put away sin, by delivering us from the guilt and punishment of it; that is to say, by procuring for us the pardon and remission of it.

This is the salvation which Zachary in his hymn foretels John Baptist should publish to the world, Luke i. *To give knowledge of salvation to his people for the remission of their sins.*

And this is that redemption of Christ, which St. Paul speaks of, 1 Coloss. i. 14. *In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.*

And lastly, St. Paul's sermon to the Gentiles is, *Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man Jesus Christ, is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him, all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses*, Acts xiii. And therefore, much less, certainly by the law of nature.

The effect of these texts is, that all mankind are sinners, are concluded under sin, are become guilty before God, as the apostle speaks. The most innocent person is not excepted. All, without exception, have, by their sins, fallen short of the glory of God. Means now for the freeing themselves from the guilt of these sins, they have none, nor is it possible they should have, for that wholly depends upon the pleasure of him to whom they have render'd themselves obnoxious; and that is God, the governor of the world. Here therefore appears the infinite mercy of God, and the kindness of our Saviour. The eternal Word interposeth, and offers himself to become man, and in that person to make satisfaction for the sins of the world. And God accepts the terms. And hereupon a covenant is made between God and mankind; wherein

wherein God, for his part, upon account of this mediation of Christ, promises forgiveness of all sins, to all true penitents all the world over.

O joyful tydings these! What ease is here to wounded consciences? What comfort to despairing sinners? What encouragement to all men every where to repent.

If we consider mankind in their pure naturals, and as without Christ Jesus, this plainly was their case: They did believe a supreme God; and their reason, it is likely, would tell them, that God was good and merciful. But yet this reason could discover no more than God's general goodness to them, that all along endeavoured to please and approve themselves to him. But as for his willingness to pardon and forgive sinners, especially those that had offended him by very grievous crimes, or lived in a long habitual course of wickedness; this they could not conclude from their reason. Nay, if they did reason as they justly might, they might rather be inclined to believe that he would not pardon such criminals. For as their reason told them, that God was good, so the same reason told them, that he was just; and had an infinite regard to the honour and reputation of his laws: Which laws, their own consciences told them, they had heinously transgressed; nor had they any thing wherewith to compensate or make satisfaction for the transgression of them: And therefore what could they expect from so just a God, but to undergo the punishment they had deserved?

This was a very uncomfortable reasoning; and yet such a one it was, as there was no answer to be given to, in the state of nature; and therefore in what a melancholy condition were mankind all the while? What

encourage-

couragement had they ſeriouſly to ſet upon the amendment of their wicked lives? Or, if they did, what fruit, what comfort could they promiſe to themſelves by ſuch an amendment?

But, bleſſed be God, that hath removed us out of theſe uncertainties; bleſſed be God, that hath given us the greateſt aſſurance that is poſſible, of his love and kindneſs to the greateſt of ſinners; and conſequently laid the greateſt obligation upon all mankind, to turn from their evil ways.

He hath ſent his Son, his only Son, into the world, on purpoſe to aſſure us of his good will to us; to give a demonſtration of the unfeigned love and kindneſs that he bears to every ſoul of the ſons of Adam, *that he would not have any of them periſh, but that they ſhould all come to the knowledge of the truth*, and be ſaved. This Son of his doth moſt ſolemnly in the name of his Father, proclaim pardon and remiſſion of ſins to every one that ſhould believe in him: There is no ſinner excepted; even the oldeſt, the greateſt, the moſt enormous of ſinners, if they will come in, and ſubmit to the yoke of Jeſus Chriſt, have his certain promiſe that they ſhall be received.

And leſt any one ſhould fear the divine juſtice, upon account that there is no ſatisfaction made to it for his ſins, our Lord hath taken care to remove that objection: For he, by the invaluable merits of his perſon, and the free unconſtrained offering up of himſelf to an ignominious death upon the croſs, on the behalf of mankind, hath made a full, compleat and entire ſatisfaction to God's juſtice for all the ſins of the world, from the beginning to the end thereof.

So that now every one hath free acceſs to God, and a right to his favour through the blood of Jeſus Chriſt.

And

And though we have been never so bad, never so unworthy; yet if we have but the hearts to forsake our sins, and come to Jesus Christ, we shall as certainly obtain the acceptance and the love of our heavenly Father, as if we had been innocent, and never sinned at all.

Nay, God is not only willing to receive us, but he earnestly begs and sollicits us to take his mercy. And so pleased he is at the return of a sinner, that our Saviour has told us, *there is joy in heaven* over such a one. Nay, *more joy among the angels over a sinner that repenteth, than over ninety-nine just persons that need no repentance.*

O how welcome ought this news to be to us! How transported should we be at the infinite kindness of God manifested to us by our Saviour! O! praised be God, for his astonishing love. For ever adored be our Lord Jesus, that has made a propitiation for us by his blood. O let us for ever kiss and hug the precious invaluable scriptures of the New-testament, if there was nothing else in them but that faithful saying, that saying, worthy of all men to be received, *That Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners*; to save you, and me, and all sinners, even the greatest of sinners.

O! who is there that is in his wits, would chuse to be out of the christian dispensation; or be left to the methods of nature and philosophy, for the attaining their happiness, as some loose people among us do sometimes talk! Were the natural talents of mankind exalted far above what they either are, or ever have been; yet I would value that one saying, *That Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners*, more than all the notions and speculations of reason and philosophy.

phy. I would desire to *know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified.* I would, with the apostle, *count all things as loss*, nay, *as dung, in comparison of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Saviour; and that I may be found in him, not having my own righteousness*, which is by nature, *but that righteousness, which is by the faith of Jesus Christ, who gave himself for me.* And thus much of Christ's appearing to put away sin, in the first notion of that expression.

But secondly, Christ appeared to put away sin in another sense: That is to say, to destroy the power and dominion of it from amongst men; to abolish it, so as that it should not henceforth reign in our mortal bodies. *To free us from sin*, as the apostle speaks, that is, to enable us to lead holy and virtuous lives. So that whereas mankind heretofore *yielded their members servants to uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity, so they should now yield their members servants to righteousness unto holiness.*

Thus to put away sin, was as principal an end of Christ's coming, as the other before-mentioned; nay, perhaps more principal: For the other, in true reasoning, may be said to be wholly in order to this. Certain it is, unless this end be attained, the other will signify nothing to us; for we are not capable of any benefit from that remission of sin which was purchased for us by Christ, until our sins be put away by repentance, and we become holy persons by the change and renewal of our natures.

Never therefore let us deceive ourselves; though Christ hath actually put away all the sins of the world in the former sense, by his satisfaction; that is to say, hath procured the pardon of them: hath taken away the sting of them, so as that they shall not be deadly

to any; yet all this is upon ſuppoſition, that the ſtrength of them be taken away in us; that they *have no dominion over us*; that we mortify them in all our members; that we daily die to them, and live a life of righteouſneſs. All that Chriſt merited or purchaſed for the world will not do us the leaſt good, unleſs we be made conformable to him in his death and reſurrection, by our *dying to ſin, and living to righteouſneſs.*

And, in truth, if we will mind it, the putting away ſin in this ſenſe of it, hath as great weight laid upon it in ſcripture, and is as often aſſigned for the great end and buſineſs of Chriſt's appearance, as the other.

St. John tells us plainly, that *for this purpoſe was the Son of God manifeſted, that he might deſtroy the works of the devil.*

And St. Paul likewiſe tells us, that he therefore *gave himſelf for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himſelf a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*

And laſtly, St. Peter gives the ſame account of his coming, Acts iii. 26. where he tells us, that therefore *God raiſed up his Son Jeſus*, that is, ſent him into the world (for his raiſing up there ſpoken of, as any one will ſee that looks into the context, was not his being raiſed from the dead, but his being manifeſted to mankind: For here the apoſtle's buſineſs is to apply that promiſe or prophecy of Moſes unto our Saviour, viz. *That God would*, in due time, *raiſe up to his people a prophet like unto him*, whom they ſhould all be obliged to hearken to: I ſay therefore, *God raiſed up his Son Jeſus*, i. e. ſent him into the world) *that he might bleſs his people, in turning every one of them from their iniquities.* This turning every one from their iniquities, was

was the great end for which our Lord Jesus Christ was manifested unto mankind.

And indeed, reason will teach us all this, as well as revelation: For, in the nature of the thing, none can be truly happy but those that are truly pious: And in the same degree and proportion that any one is wicked, or is under the power of his lusts, in the same degree he must needs be miserable. So that if Christ came to be our Saviour, and in that, meant either to make us happy, or to keep us from being miserable; there was an absolute necessity, that his first and principal design must be, to root out of our nature all sin and wickedness; and to restore the image of God in our minds, which consists in unchangeable purity and holiness, and goodness.

Away, therefore, with all those hypotheses, that give such an account of Christ's coming into the world, as to make the ultimate end of it to be the freeing us from hell and damnation, and purchasing heaven and eternal life for us, but without any respect had to the renewing our natures, or the making us sincerely holy and virtuous. All such accounts of Christ's undertaking, are monstrously unreasonable and absurd.

For not to insist upon the manifest affront they put upon God's justice and holiness, in making him the great patron of sin, whilst they assert him to be the justifier of wicked men, even whilst they continue wicked;

You cannot, as I said, but see (in the first place) how very much such doctrines do disparage the love of our Saviour, and lessen his undertaking: For whilst he is here supposed to have redeemed us only from his Father's wrath, and the punishment consequent thereupon; leaving us in the mean time to the wickedness

and

and impurity of our own nature, which alone, without the acceſſion of any other external evil, is a miſery great enough: He is hereby rendered but half a Saviour; one that freed us indeed from an external evil, but left us irremediably expoſed to an internal one, as grievous as the other: One that delivered us from the apprehenſions of a gibbet, or an executioner; but could not, or would not cure us of the inward ſickneſſes and maladies under which we languiſhed.

But this is not all. In the ſecond place, it ought to be taken notice of, what an abſurd inconſiſtent notion this kind of doctrine gives us of the happineſs of mankind; for whilſt they ſuppoſe, that a man under the power and dominion of ſin, is capable of that happineſs which Chriſt purchaſed for us in the other world (which happineſs, as both ſcripture and reaſon teſtify, doth chiefly conſiſt in the enjoyment of God, and of his excellencies and perfections;) they muſt at the ſame time ſuppoſe, that a man may be rendered happy by the enjoyment of that of which he has no ſenſe, no perception; or rather, to ſpeak properly, that he is the happieſt creature alive, in the enjoyment of an object, to which he has the greateſt averſion and antipathy in the world. Which, if it be not an abſurdity, I know not what is. When light can have communion with darkneſs, when God can have fellowſhip with Belial; then, and not till then, can a wicked man, a man that lives in ſin, and loves it, be capable of that happineſs which Jeſus Chriſt hath purchaſed for us.

IV. The fourth thing I ſhould ſpeak to from this text, is the means by which our Saviour brought to paſs the great end of his appearance, viz. *The putting away of ſin:* which means are ſaid to be the ſacrifice of

himself. *Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.*

Two things should be done, in order to a just discourse upon this point.

First, To give an account, how the death of Christ was a means for the putting away of sin, in the first sense I gave, that is, the procuring the pardon of it.

Secondly, How it was a means of putting it away in the other sense, that is, the destroying or mortifying it in us.

But these things being foreign to our present business, and more proper for the argument of a Good-friday sermon; I shall say no more of them, but proceed to my last point.

V. The fifth and last thing observable from the text, is the difference of Christ's sacrifice, whereby he put away sin, from the Mosaical ones: Which difference, so far as it is here taken notice of, consists in this; that the legal sacrifices, for the expiation of sin, were daily offered; but Christ offered the *sacrifice of himself*, but once, *Once in the end of the world*, &c.

The apostle, in this chapter, is discoursing of the difference between the law and the gospel. And as to that point, he insists much on the difference of their sacrifices. The Christians that owned the gospel, had but one sacrifice, the sacrifice of Christ once offered; whereas those that were under the law, were forced to have many. Nay, even the most solemn sacrifice that God had appointed, for the expiation of their sins, was repeated once a year, as the apostle tells us, in the verse before my text. But now the sacrifice of Christ, which he puts by way of opposition to theirs, that was but once offered, and was never to be repeated. This is the point with which he concludes this chapter:

Two

Two verſes after my text, *Chriſt*, ſaith he, *was once offered, to bear the ſins of many, and unto them that look for him, ſhall he appear the ſecond time unto ſalvation.*

This is the apoſtle's doctrine, and I inſiſt on it now, becauſe all thoſe that deſign, on this day, to receive the holy ſacrament, are concerned in it.

Let us from hence take notice, that in this ſervice of the holy communion, we are not to pretend to offer Chriſt as a ſacrifice to his Father: His ſacrifice was but once to be offered, and that was done ſeventeen hundred years ago; and in the virtue of that ſacrifice once offered, all faithful chriſtians, and ſincere penitents, ſhall receive remiſſion of ſins, and all other benefits of his paſſion. But for us to think of offering Chriſt again as a ſacrifice, is in effect to put ourſelves into the ſame rank and condition with the unbelieving Jews, that is, to need the repetition of the ſame ſacrifices every year, nay, every day, which is the very reaſon, for which the apoſtle denied the efficacy of them.

We do not indeed deny, but that every time we approach to the Lord's table, for the receiving of the holy communion, we offer ſacrifices to God: For we offer our alms, which we beg of God to accept as our oblations; and theſe, in the language of ſcripture, are *ſacrifices with which God is well pleaſed.*

We likewiſe offer our ſacrifice of praiſe and thankſgiving to God, for the death of our Saviour: And all our prayers and ſupplications we put up in his name, and in the virtue, and for the merits of that ſacrifice he offered to God in our behalf: And in ſo doing, we commemorate that ſacrifice both to God, and before men. And this is all, we are confident, that the an-

cient church meant by the great christian sacrifice, or the sacrifice of the altar.

But if we go further. if we will in the communion, pretend to offer up the body and blood of Christ in sacrifice to God, that was once sacrificed upon the cross; it is intolerable. It is a thing that was never dreamed of in the first ages of the church: It is directly contradictory to the foundation of all the apostle's argument and discourse here in the text; and the very supposal of it brings along with it many grievous absurdities in the theory, and something that looks like impious in the practice.

And yet this is the constant and avowed doctrine and practice of the church of Rome, in every sacrament they have, and that is in every mass that is said among them. The main business of that mystery they make to consist in the priest's offering up to God the very body and blood of Christ, the same body and blood that was once offered up at Jerusalem; this they pretend to offer up as a sacrifice every day: And they attribute to this their offering the same virtue and efficacy that the apostles and all christians have always attributed to the one sacrifice of Christ upon the cross; that is, that it is a true propitiatory sacrifice for the living and for the dead: And none among them dare deny this, under pain of an anathema, as the council of Trent hath ordered the matter.

Good God! whither will interest and faction, and zeal for a party transport men? But it is not my business to expose them, but to put you in mind of what concerns ourselves, namely, as I said, that when we come to the Lord's table, we do not approach thither with a belief that our Lord Jesus is there again offered, but only with a design to commemorate his sacrifice

that

that was once offered. We come not thither to ſacrifice Chriſt, but to be partakers of his ſacrifice. We are not to feaſt God; but God there feaſts us, and that with the beſt food in the world; ſuch food as will nouriſh us to eternal life, if we be worthy gueſts: Only we muſt not appear before God empty at this ſolemnity: We muſt offer to him of our ſubſtance: We muſt offer our prayers and ſupplications, not only for ourſelves, but for all the world; but more eſpecially for all that are called by the name of Chriſt; and among thoſe, moſt particularly, for our own church and kingdom, and all orders and degrees of men therein. We muſt offer likewiſe ourſelves, our ſouls and bodies *a living ſacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is our reaſonable ſervice.* And laſtly, to conclude, we muſt offer our moſt hearty and affectionate thanks to God Almighty, for that incomprehenſible inſtance of his love, in ſending Chriſt Jeſus to us to be our Saviour; for his wonderful birth, for his holy life, for his precious death, for his glorious reſurrection and aſcenſion, and for his interceſſion for us, at the right hand of God.

And O thou bleſſed Saviour, thou haſt done all this for us, give us ſuch a lively ſenſe of thy marvellous love, in leaving thy glory, and taking human fleſh upon thee, that thou mighteſt dwell among us, and inſtruct us in our duty, and aſſiſt us in the performance of it, and encourage us thereto, by the glorious hopes of a never-dying life, and at laſt make thyſelf an offering for our ſins! O let theſe things ſink ſo deeply in our minds, and ſo wholly poſſeſs our hearts, that we may entirely give up ourſelves to thee! That we may with our whole ſouls embrace all thy doctrines and revelations: That we may endeavour in all our actions, to

conform ourſelves to thy example; and make it the buſineſs of our lives to be obedient to thy precepts, to ſubmit to thy will, and to be contented to be diſpoſed of by thee, in all the circumſtances of our lives. O let nothing in thy religion ever be an offence to us! But enable us to hold the profeſſion of our own faith in thee without wavering, in all the trials and difficulties thou ſhalt think fit to expoſe us to; that ſo in faith and obedience, in patience and perſeverance, we may ever wait for, and at laſt obtain that *crown of righteouſneſs, which thou haſt laid up for all that love thee, and expect thy* ſecond and more glorious *appearance.*

To thee, O eternal Son of God, thou great lover of mankind; to thee, who *tookeſt upon thee to deliver man, and didſt not abhor the virgin's womb*; to thee, *who owercameſt the ſharpneſs of death, and didſt open the kingdom of heaven to all believers:* To thee, O moſt dear, O moſt beloved, O moſt adorable Jeſus, be for ever given by us, and by all the ſouls whom thou haſt redeemed, and by all the creatures in heaven and earth, all honour, and glory, and praiſe, all ſervice and love, and obedience, henceforth and for evermore.

SER-

SERMON XII.

The Power of Chriſt's Reſurrection.

PHIL. iii. 10.

That I may know him, and the power of his reſurrection.

WE ſhall eaſily ſee the deſign of theſe words, and what uſe we are to make of them, if we look at their connexion with the diſcourſe that goes before. St. Paul, in this chapter, ſets himſelf to ſhew the excellency, and the great advantages of the knowledge of Jeſus Chriſt, and how inconſiderable, how unworthy to be named in compariſon therewith, all thoſe things were, that the Jews his countrymen ſo much gloried in. His diſcourſe, upon this occaſion, is ſo very remarkable, that it will be worth our while to run over the particulars of it.

I alſo (ſaith he in the 4th verſe) *might have confidence in the fleſh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might truſt in the fleſh, I more.* As if he had ſaid, think not, O Philippians, that I therefore ſpeak lightly of thoſe privileges and advantages, which

the Jews among you ſo much boaſt of, upon this account, becauſe I have none of them myſelf: No, on the contrary, if I would value myſelf upon ſuch outward carnal things, I have as much reaſon as any. Nay, there is not a Jew among you, that, perhaps, can ſay ſo much on his own behalf, in this reſpect, as I can.

For, (as he goes on in the fifth and ſixth verſes) *I was circumciſed the eighth day, of the ſtock of Iſrael, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a phariſee: Concerning zeal, perſecuting the church: Touching the righteouſneſs which is by the law, blameleſs.*

That is to ſay; I have not only the character of a ſon of Abraham upon me, being circumciſed; but I am alſo of the race of Iſrael, which all the circumciſed children of Abraham are not.

Nay, further, I am an Iſraelite of the tribe of Benjamin; that Benjamin which our father Iſrael ſo dearly loved, and of that tribe, which, together with Judah, kept firm to the houſe of David, and the true religion, when the other ten tribes revolted.

Nay, more, I am an Hebrew of the Hebrews: Not ſprung from proſelytes, as many among you are, but all my anceſtors, both by father and mother, being natural-born Jews.

And then, as to my profeſſion in religion, it was the ſtricteſt among the Jews; for I was a phariſee. And ye all know, that ſect of all others to be the moſt eminent for the reputation of preciſeneſs and ſanctity.

Neither did I in my zeal for the law of Moſes come ſhort of the ſtricteſt phariſee that is among you; for who

who was more buſy, more eager, more violent in perſecuting chriſtianity than I was?

And laſtly, to ſum up all, *As to the righteouſneſs which is by the law, I am blameleſs.* So punctual have I always been, in obſerving the precepts of Moſes his law, that none can reprove me in that point; but I may truly, in the jewiſh notion of righteouſneſs, be accounted a righteous perſon.

But now, am I much the better for all theſe things? Have I any great reaſon to glory upon the account of them? No, verily, (as he goes on in the ſeventh verſe) *but what things were gain to me, thoſe I counted loſs for Chriſt.* All theſe outward advantages, my birth, my profeſſion, my ſect, my reputation, my ſtrict way of living, which might have proved very beneficial to me in all worldly reſpects; when I once came to the knowledge of the chriſtian religion, I deſpiſed them all: For in truth, I found that they were ſo far from being real advantages to me, that they were rather hindrances in the way of virtue and piety.

Yea, doubtleſs (as he goes on in the 8th verſe) *I account all things but loſs for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus my Lord, for whom I have ſuffered the loſs of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Chriſt:* That is to ſay, not only the above-named privileges, but all other things whatſoever, wealth, greatneſs, fame, friends, and life itſelf, I account them all very pitiful things, if they be compared with the ineſtimable advantages of being a chriſtian. As I have once, ſo I will again readily forſake all, part with all things that the world holds moſt dear and valuable, nay, I will trample them under my feet, like dirt and dung; provided I may obtain the favour of Chriſt.

And (as he goes on in the 9th verſe) *that I might be found in him, not having my own righteouſneſs, which is of the law, but that which is by the faith of Jeſus Chriſt, the righteouſneſs which is of God by faith.* This paſſage hath been frequently miſunderſtood, and interpreted to a ſenſe that I believe St. Paul did not think of. St. Paul doth not here oppoſe an inherent righteouſneſs to an imputed one; but an outward, natural, legal righteouſneſs to that which is inward and ſpiritual, and wrought in a man by the Spirit of God. The righteouſneſs which the apoſtle here deſires to be found in, is not the righteouſneſs of Chriſt made his, or imputed to him; but a real righteouſneſs produced in his ſoul by the faith of Jeſus Chriſt.

The plain ſenſe of the verſe ſeems to be this. That which above all things I deſire, is to be found in Chriſt, i. e. to be found a diſciple of his, ingrafted into him, by being a member of his church; *not having my own righteouſneſs, which is of the law*, i. e. not being content with thoſe outward privileges, and that outward obedience, which by my own natural ſtrength, I am able to yield to the precepts of the law, which is that righteouſneſs, in which the Jews place their confidence, and by which they expect to be juſtified before God: *But that which is by the faith of Jeſus Chriſt, the righteouſneſs which is of God by faith*; i. e. that righteouſneſs which I deſire, and in which only I ſhall have the confidence to appear before God, is an inward principle of holineſs; that ſpiritual renewed obedience to God's laws, which he doth require as the condition of his favour and acceptance, and which I can never attain to, but by the faith of Chriſt; by becoming a chriſtian. This is none of my own righteouſneſs, but God's, it being wrought in me hy his Spirit,

Spirit, accompanying the preaching of the gospel; and as it is his gift, so he will own it, and reward it at the last day.

This is the full importance of that verse; and then it follows by way of explication of what we now said, *That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection*, &c. This is the righteousness that I aspire after, that I may know Christ, not only by a notional belief of his doctrines, or profession of his religion, but by a spiritual experimental knowledge of him, such a knowledge as transforms me into his spirit and temper; and that I may know the power of his resurrection, i. e. that I may experience in myself all the good effects that his resurrection has a power to work in me; that I may feel the virtue and efficacy of it, in my daily dying to sin, and rising again to a new, holy, and heavenly life. This is that righteousness I long for, and in comparison of which, I account all things in the world but as loss, and as dung.

Thus have I given you a full account of the text, and all the apostle's discourse that it depends upon. I come now to treat more particularly of it, with reference to the solemnity of this day.

We all here present do profess to believe the article of our Saviour's resurrection; and our business, at this time, is to celebrate the memory of it: but we must not rest here. We are not to look upon our Lord's resurrection meerly as a thing to be believed, or professed, or commemorated; or as a matter of fact, that only concerned himself: but there is a great deal in it, which does nearly concern us. The apostle tells us, there is a great power in it; even a power of raising us from sin to a holy and virtuous life. It is so ordered, as to be capable of being, and it ought to be,

a principle of new life in us, as it was the beginning of a new life in our Saviour. Now this virtue, this power, this efficacy of it, as it is that, which with the apoſtle, we ought all moſt earneſtly to endeavour the experiencing in ourſelves; ſo it is that which will be fitteſt for us, at this time, to apply our meditations to.

My work, therefore, at this time, ſhall be to give ſome account of the power of Chriſt's reſurrection, in order to the making men good, which the apoſtle here ſpeaks of; to ſhew how, or in what reſpects it doth influence upon the lives of chriſtians.

Now if we look into the holy ſcriptures, we ſhall find that there is a four-fold power attributed to it, or that it hath an influence upon our lives in theſe four reſpects; that is to ſay,

I. As it lays an obligation upon chriſtians to holineſs and virtue.

II. As it is the principal evidence of the truth of our religion, the deſign of which is to make men holy and virtuous.

III. As it is the great ſupport of our future hopes, or our hopes of another life; which indeed is the main encouragement we have to apply ourſelves ſeriouſly to the buſineſs of holineſs and virtue.

IV. And fourthly, as to it we do principally owe all that ſupernatural grace and ſtrength, by which we are enabled to live holily and virtuouſly. Of theſe four points I ſhall diſcourſe very briefly.

I. And firſt of all, our Saviour's reſurrection hath an influence upon our practice, as it lays an obligation upon chriſtians to lead holy and virtuous lives: As it is in itſelf an incitement to piety, and heavenly-mindedneſs.

This

This is indeed the loweſt inſtance of its power; but yet we ought not to paſs it by, becauſe the writers of the New-teſtament do frequently inſiſt on it: For thus they argue; If Chriſt was crucified for our ſins, then ought we to crucify them in our members. And if Chriſt roſe again the third day, then are we engaged, in conformity to him, to riſe again to newneſs of life, to lead a ſpiritual, divine, heavenly life, ſuch a life as he now lives with God.

And this, in the ancient times, was taught every chriſtian in and by his baptiſm. Whenever a perſon was baptized, he was not only to profeſs his faith in Chriſt's death and reſurrection, but he was alſo to look upon himſelf as obliged, in correſpondence therewith, to mortify his former carnal affections, and to enter upon a new ſtate of life. And the very form of baptiſm did lively repreſent this obligation to them. For what did their being plung'd under water ſignify, but their undertaking, in imitation of Chriſt's death and burial, to forſake all their former evil courſes; as their aſcending out of the water did their engagement to lead a holy ſpiritual life? This our apoſtle doth more than once declare to us.

Thus, Rom. vi. 4. *We are buried* (ſaith he) *with Chriſt by baptiſm into death, that like as Chriſt was raiſed up from the dead, by the glory of the Father, even ſo we alſo ſhould walk in newneſs of life.* Thus again in the 10th and 11th verſes of that chapter, *In that Chriſt died, he died unto ſin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God: Likewiſe reckon ye yourſelves to be dead indeed unto ſin, but alive unto God, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord:* That is to ſay, after the example of Chriſt's death and reſurrection, account ye yourſelves obliged to die to ſin, and to live to righteouſneſs.

7. Laſtly,

Lastly, to name no more texts, The same use doth the apostle make of Christ's resurrection, in Colos. iii. 1, 2. *If ye then* (saith he) *be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God*; *i. e.* You by entering into the christian covenant, are incorporated into Christ; He is your head, you are his members; and therefore since he no longer leads a life of this world, it will by no means become you to live like worldlings or epicures; but being risen with him (as the members ought to do with the head) *to mind those things that are above*, where he is; *to set your affections* (as he goes on) *on the things above, and not on the things of the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.*

These things plainly shew, that the apostles delivered the doctrine of Christ's resurrection, as a practical doctrine; as a point, which if christians believed as they should do, it would engage them to mortify their lusts, to die to the world, to place their affection on spiritual things, to have their conversations in heaven, where Christ our head, our life, now sits at the right hand of God.

II. Great will the influence and power of Christ's resurrection upon our lives appear to be, when we consider, that it is, indeed, the principal evidence that we have for the truth of our religion, the very design of which is to make us virtuous and holy.

If any thing in the world can make a man good, it must be a hearty belief of the gospel. And if any thing in the world can make a man heartily to believe the gospel, it must be the resurrection of our Saviour from the dead. All that power, therefore, that the gospel of Christ hath to make men good; all that force

force and efficacy, that its arguments, its promiſes, its precepts, its encouragements, its threatnings, have upon the underſtandings and wills of men, in order to bring them to virtue and holineſs; I ſay, all this may, in a great meaſure, ultimately be reſolved into the article of Chriſt's reſurrection. For this reſurrection of his was the thing that did from the beginning, and doth now, and ever will aſcertain mankind of the truth of Chriſt's religion. This was, and will be for ever, the convincing evidence, that what Jeſus taught was true doctrine; that what he commanded was of perpetual obligation; that what he promiſed or threatened he was able to make good.

If Chriſt had not riſen from the dead, but had for ever been detained in the grave; notwithſtanding all that might be urged from the goodneſs of his doctrine, and the innocency of his life, and the multitude of his miracles, for the proof of the truth of chriſtianity (though yet very ſtrong and concluding proofs theſe are) I doubt it would hardly have met with that ready entertainment in the world, that we find it did: But a great many, both then and now, would have made the ſame objection againſt Jeſus Chriſt and his goſpel, that the phariſees did of old; that is to ſay, that all his great works and miracles were done by ſorcery and magic. And that as for the innocency of his life, and the great virtue and ſtrictneſs that he expreſſed in his converſation; that was only uſed as a trick and an artifice, the more eaſily to impoſe upon the world. But now, when it appears that Jeſus, who taught his holy religion; who did thoſe miracles; who lived that virtuous life; did, after he was put to a cruel death, riſe again to life, and converſed upon earth for forty days together; and after that, in the preſence of many

many ſpectators, did aſcend into heaven: I ſay, when this appears (as God be thanked, it is evident beyond all contradiction) here is no room left for any ſuſpicion of this nature, but all pretences of impoſture do perfectly vaniſh. It is impoſſible for any conſidering man to believe Chriſt's reſurrection, and at the ſame time to doubt of the truth of his religion.

For thus let us reaſon; Chriſt over and over again told his apoſtles, that he ſhould be put to death; but after that, he would within three days riſe again, Matt. xvi. 21. xvii. 22. John xvi. 16.

Nay, he told this not only to the apoſtles, but to all the people; nay, more than that, he gave this as a token, as an evidence to them, whereby they ſhould know, and be convinced that he was what he gave himſelf out to be, the Son of God, and the great Prophet and Saviour that was to come, John ii. 19.

Nay, in the laſt place, he not only refers the Jews to his reſurrection. as an evidence of his being the Chriſt, but as the laſt and greateſt evidence that he had to give, and ſuch as if they were not convinced by, they muſt expect no other, Matt. xii. 39, 40.

Our Saviour now laying ſuch a mighty ſtreſs upon this point of his reſurrection, putting his whole cauſe (as I may ſpeak) upon this iſſue; I aſk, how is it poſſible to imagine, that God Almighty ſhould make theſe predictions of our Saviour good, if he was not really what he pretended to be?

If Chriſt had been an impoſtor, it had been the eaſieſt matter in the world to have ſtifled all his pretences for ever. It had but been to have let him moulder'd to duſt in his grave, as all other men do, and as he, without the help of omnipotency, would have done; and then all the world would have ſeen that he

was

was a deceiver. But now, when instead of perishing in the grave, he was, after three days, restored to life again, as he had foretold the people; nay, to a glorious immortal life; what are we to conclude from hence?

Did not God in this appear with a witness, as a voucher and approver of his cause? Was not this a demonstration to all the world, that Christ Jesus was no deceiver, but that he came from God; and that whatever he delivered, was the truth of God, and to be received as the oracles of God? Certainly it was.

For that a man should be raised from the dead by any other power, than the very power of God, all the world knows to be impossible. The devil, though he can do very strange feats in the natural world; yet I never heard or read, that either he, or any of his agents or ministers, so much as pretended to raise the dead to life again: And certainly, if he could have done it, he would have done it often before this, (as in the case of Apollonius Tyanæus, Mahomet, and others) if it had been for no other reason, than to baffle thereby the evidence of our Saviour's resurrection, to render it unconcluding.

It must therefore certainly be the power of God that raised up Jesus from the dead. But then to suppose that God should employ this power for the giving testimony to a falshood, that he should set his own seal to attest an untruth, as he must be supposed to have done, if Jesus was not his Son; what an unaccountable thing is this? No man that believes that God is faithful, and just, and true, and that he governs the world, can possibly imagine such a thing. For this had been to have contradicted all his own attributes, and to have laid an invincible temptation and snare before all mankind,

kind, to believe an impious lye. You see then what an unexceptionable proof, (nay, demonstration I may call it) the resurrection of Christ doth afford us of the truth of his religion; which is the second instance of the power that is in it, to bring men over to holiness and virtue.

III. But thirdly, the power of Christ's resurrection for the making us holy and virtuous, will further appear in this respect. Namely, as it is, in particular, the great support of our future hopes; the great pledge and assurance of our own resurrection and immortality.

For if Christ be risen, then may we also be certain that we shall at last be raised by him. Because Christ is not risen, for himself only, but *as the first fruits of them that slept*, 1 Cor. xv. Good reason therefore had St. Paul to argue as he doth in that place, *If Christ be preached that he is risen from the dead; how say some among you, that there is no resurrection?* On the contrary (as he urges) *If we believe that Jesus Christ died and rose again; even so them also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him*, 1 Thess. iv. 14.

For how can we desire to be better assured, that our bodies shall not for ever sleep in the grave, but shall at last be re-united to our souls, and both soul and body live eternally in unspeakable bliss and happiness; I say, how can we have greater assurance of this, than by what was on this day brought to pass in our Saviour?

We have hereby a clear demonstration, that the resurrection is possible. For Christ, who was once dead, is alive again, and lives in unexpressible glory, at the right hand of God. And at the same time that he rose, he raised up other bodies also of holy men to accompany him in his triumph over death.

But

But that is not all; he that raised up himself and them, hath given us his solemn word and promise, in as express terms as is possible, that he will, by the same power, raise up us also; and exalt us to the same glory that he is possessed of. He hath told us, that he is *the resurrection and the life:* And that *whosoever believeth in him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life; and he will raise him up at the last day.* There cannot be a stronger proof of any thing, than our Saviour's resurrection is of the happiness of good men in another state.

Which being so; How powerful a means must we needs conclude it to be, for the reforming the manners of mankind, and making them truly holy and virtuous?

Since we have thereby such a demonstration given us of a glorious immortality to be expected by us; what is it that can be able to hinder or divert us from a serious pursuit of those things that lead to it? What could God do more, by way of motive and argument, towards the proselyting the world to religion and righteousness, than he hath done, by thus ascertaining our future happiness, by the resurrection of his Son Jesus?

To be certain, that if we seriously apply ourselves to a life of piety here, we shall be crowned with everlasting felicity hereafter! To be certain, that if we follow the steps of our blessed Saviour, we shall for ever shine in the same glory and lustre that he now doth at the right hand of his Father! To be able positively to say, *I know that my Redeemer liveth*; and I know, that if I live as he did, I shall for ever live with him; and tho' *it doth not yet appear what I shall be*, yet this I know, *that when he shall appear, I shall*

be like him! O what noble thoughts, what brave resolutions is this able to inspire us with? What difficulties shall we be afraid of? What labours shall we not willingly undertake? What temptations shall we not easily vanquish in the prospect of such an eternal crown of glory, as awaits us, and is secured to us by our Lord Jesus?

O happy we christians! that have so clear a revelation of those things, *which God hath prepared for them that love him*; those things which *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither did they enter into the heart of man!* Blessed, for ever blessed be our Lord Jesus Christ, that hath *begotten us again to this lively hope by his resurrection from the dead.*

O! what mighty encouragements have we to set ourselves against our sins, and to labour after the perfection of virtue, in comparison of what those have who are ignorant of our Saviour's resurrection, and who know nothing of the other world, but by the uncertain conjectures of their natural reason?

If we had no other assurance of the immortality of the soul, and the rewards and punishments of another life, but what is afforded us by the light of nature, and the deductions of philosophy; I doubt we could never expect to see any great reformation in our manners.

Some of the philosophers have, indeed, to their immortal fame, asserted the truth of these things: But then others of them have as much made it their business to run them down. And as for those of them that spoke the best concerning the other world, yet God knows, their discourses upon this argument (as will appear to any that reads them) are generally very uncertain, and altogether conjectural.

But

But admitting their reasons to be strong and conclusive (as I am far from denying, that the soul's immortality is demonstrable by the light of nature) yet there are generally these two inconveniencies in the arguments they make use of, for the proof of this matter, which render them in a great measure ineffectual for the reforming mens lives.

First, They are generally of so great subtilty, so nice, so metaphysical, so much above the reach of ordinary capacities, that they are useless to the greatest part of mankind, who have not understandings fitted for them.

And, secondly, They have this inconvenience like wise, that a man doth not see the evidence of them, without actual attention to a long train of propositions; which attention, it may be, when a man most stands in need of their support, he shall neither have the leisure nor the humour to give.

But now the christian method of proving another life, is quite of another strain, and wholly free from these inconveniencies. That demonstration which Christ hath given us of a glorious immortality by his resurrection from the dead, as it is infinitely certain and conclusive; so it is plain and easy, short and compendious, powerful and operative. No man that believes the matter of fact, can deny the cogency of it: Men of the meanest capacities may apprehend it. Persons in a crowd of business, and in the midst of temptations, may attend to it. And it hath this virtue besides, that it leaves a lasting impression upon the spirits of those that do believe and consider it.

Thanks therefore to our Lord Jesus Christ, for this excellent instrument of piety, that he hath given us by his resurrection. Everlasting praises to his name, that

that he hath thus *brought life and immortality to light by his gospel.* This very thing alone, was there nothing else to be said for the christian revelation, would sufficiently justify both the gospel itself, and our Lord Jesus, the author of it, to all mankind; nay, and effectually recommend his religion, above all others that ever were taught, to all persons, in all nations of the world.

IV. Fourthly and lastly, There is still a further blessing coming to us by our Saviour's resurrection from the dead; and in which, indeed, is chiefly seen and expressed the great power of it, for the making us holy and virtuous; that is to say, Unto it we do principally owe all that supernatural grace and assistance, by which we are enabled to vanquish our corruptions, and to live up to the precepts of our religion.

As Christ by his resurection did oblige us to lead new lives; as Christ by his resurrection did demonstrate the truth of the christian religion, which is wholly in order to our leading new lives; as by his resurrection he cleared up to us the certainty of our future state, and thereby gave us the greatest motive and encouragement to lead new lives: So, in the last place, by the same resurrection he acquired a power of conferring grace and strength, and influence upon us, by the virtue of which, we are in fact enabled to lead new lives.

Though Christ by his death reconciled us to God, and procured a pardon of sin for us; yet the actual benefit of this reconciliation, the actual application of this pardon, did depend upon our performance of certain conditions; which conditions were, that we should mortify all our evil affections, and frame our lives suitable to the laws of the gospel. But now the grace and

power

power by which we are enabled to do this, was not the effect of Chriſt's death, but of his reſurrection.

It was *when he aſcended up on high, and led captivity captive*; that is, when he had vanquiſhed death, which had vanquiſhed all the world before: It was then, (as the ſcripture aſſures us) and not till then, that he was in a capacity of *giving gifts unto men.* It was not till he was *glorified*, as St. John obſerves, that *the Holy Spirit was given.*

Hence it is, that we every where find the apoſtles attributing the buſineſs of man's juſtification and ſalvation, as much, or more to Chriſt's reſurrection, than to his paſſion. *If Chriſt be not riſen* (ſaith St. Paul, 1 Cor. xv.) *your faith is in vain, ye are yet in your ſins.* Indeed, if Chriſt had periſhed in the grave, we had ſtill had all the load of our ſins upon us; becauſe we had no aſſurance, that God had accepted the atonement and propitiation, which he had made for them. And much leſs could we have promiſed to ourſelves, that we ſhould have been aſſiſted by any divine power, for the ſubduing of them.

Again, the ſame St. Paul tells us, Rom. iv. that *Chriſt was delivered for our ſins, and raiſed again for our juſtification.* Chriſt's death was the ſacrifice, the ſatisfaction for our ſins. But it was by the means of his reſurrection, that that ſacrifice and ſatisfaction is applied to us, and we, for the merits of it, become juſtified before God.

Laſtly, to name no more texts, *Who* (ſaith the ſame apoſtle, Rom. viii.) *ſhall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that juſtifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Chriſt that died, yea, rather that is riſen again; who is even at the right hand of God, who alſo maketh interceſſion for us.*

Here then is the great power of our Saviour's reſurrection to make us good. Chriſt being riſen from the dead, hath all power given him both in heaven and in earth; *God*, as St. Paul expreſſeth it, *hath put all things under his feet, and hath given him to be head over all things to the church*, Eph. i. 22. Now in the fulneſs of that power that he is inveſted with; as he doth on one hand, with never-failing efficacy, make continual interceſſion for his church, and every member of it; ſo he doth on the other hand, out of the fulneſs of that power, derive and communicate ſo much ſtrength, and grace, and aſſiſtance of the Divine Spirit to all chriſtians; that if they make a good uſe of it, they ſhall not fail to perform all thoſe conditions of faith, and repentance, and a holy life, that are required of them, in order to their being made actual partakers of all thoſe unſpeakable benefits which he purchaſed for mankind by his death and ſufferings.

Chriſt by his reſurrection is become both our high-prieſt and our king; both our advocate and our Lord. By that power which he then obtained as our prieſt and advocate, he doth with authority recommend us and all our concernments to his Father. As our king, and Lord, he rules and governs; he takes care of us; he provides for us; he repreſſes the inſults of his and our enemies, and defeats all their attempts againſt us: And laſtly, he ſupplies us from time to time, with ſuch a meaſure of grace and ſtrength, and influence of his Divine Spirit, as he ſees is needful or proper for our condition.

If all this now, that I have ſaid, be the effect of our Saviour's reſurrection, as it certainly is; muſt we not needs own, that there is a mighty power in it for the making us good? What can any man among us, that

that professeth to believe, that Jesus was raised from the dead, say for himself, if he leads a wicked life? What apology can he make for the continuance in his sins? Will he say, that the temptations to sin are too strong for him; that he wants grace and strength to overcome his evil habits; and that through the corruption of his nature, he must of necessity remain a slave all his days to his passions and appetites whether he will or no? Why, in saying this, he forgets that Christ is risen from the dead: For if he did remember that, he would remember also, that there is a virtue and power, above that of corrupt nature, which he, as a christian, may easily come by, if he seriously seek after it; namely, the grace and strength of the Holy Spirit of God, which I have been speaking of, which Christ upon his resurrection obtained the disposal of; and which he never fails to send down upon every soul that heartily prays for it; and whenever he gives it, he gives it in such measures, that a man must certainly, by the influence thereof, overcome all his evil and corrupt affections; or, if he do not, it shall be intirely his own fault.

O, what a mighty comfort and encouragement ought this to be, to all those that heartily desire and endeavour to be good! All such may with boldness approach to the throne of grace, and confidently open their wants, not doubting of such relief, as is most convenient for them. Our Saviour is risen, and sits at the right hand of God. He that loved us so dearly, as to die for us, is now entered into his kingdom, and is able to grant us whatsoever we ask.

Do we find ourselves burdened with our sins? Do we want strength to resist temptations, and to master our strong corruptions? *Our Saviour is risen*, and now

ever liveth to make intercession for us. Let us fly to him for succour, let us beg a portion of that grace and Holy Spirit he hath purchased for us. We may rest satisfied he will hear our prayers, and derive such vigour and influence upon our souls, that we shall in due time, by the means thereof, vanquish and triumph over every thing that opposeth us.

We cannot in any wise doubt of his power; for God, by raising him from the dead, hath made him both king and priest, hath exalted him to the highest authority and dignity both in heaven and earth. We cannot doubt of his good will; for he that underwent so many difficulties and agonies for us in the days of his flesh, cannot forget those whom he hath ransomed with so great a price, nor suffer that power which God hath given him to lie by him unemployed.

To conclude, Let us not faint; let not our hearts be troubled; let us not despair of any thing. *Our Saviour is risen.* Our high-priest is entered within the veil, hath taken possession of the highest heaven, where he continually makes intercession for us. Such a high-priest as is kind and compassionate, and tender-hearted; that knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are but dust; that pities our weaknesses, and is sensible of the difficulties we have to conflict with, as having himself had sufficient experience of them: and withal, such a high-priest as is *able to save to the uttermost all those that come unto God through him.*

Thus have I given some account of the virtue of our Saviour's resurrection, in order to the making us sincerely good. What remains, but that, as we should heartily thank God for these benefits of it, so we should especially endeavour to be partakers of them, not contenting ourselves with a notional, ineffectual faith,

faith, but labouring with St. Paul, experimentally to *know* Christ Jesus, *and the power of his resurrection.*

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON XIII.

GOD's government of the world, matter of rejoicing to mankind.

PSALM xcvii. 1.

The Lord is King, the earth may be glad thereof, yea, the multitude of the isles may be glad thereof.

THAT is to say, it ought to be matter of exceeding joy to all the inhabitants of the world, that amidst all the uncertainties, and hazards, and variety of fortunes, which they here find themselves exposed to, there is one above that governs all.

God, that made the world, is the king of it. All the beings of the universe, angels, men, and devils, with all the other animate or inanimate things in heaven and earth, as they are his creatures, so are they truly and properly his subjects, and act entirely in sub-

subordination to him, as ministers and instruments do under the guidance of the principal agent.

God doth as truly reign in the world, as any king does in his kingdom; he doth as truly order the affairs of it, as any master doth those of his own family. Nay, a man's own thoughts and actions are not by a thousand times so much attended by himself, are not so much in his care, as the affairs of the universe are attended by, and are the care of God Almighty.

This is the notion of the Lord's being king; and, do you not think it ought to be matter of rejoicing to all reasonable creatures?

O Lord! what a gloomy dismal scene of things do they present us with, that give other accounts of these matters?

To banish God's providence and government out of the world, is to banish all joy, all peace, all hope, all comfort for ever, from all those that have the power of thinking.

A brute, indeed, is not much concern'd how matters are order'd: an ox may grow fat in his stall, and a colt frisk in his pasture, let the hypothesis of the government of the world be what it will. But to one that is made with a faculty of reasoning, that has hopes and fears, and reflects on what is past, and hath a prospect of what is future; what black and melancholy apprehensions must it cause in such a one, to suppose that no care is taken of human affairs; but that we sail in the tempestuous ocean of this world, every minute in danger of rocks and quicksands, without any pilot to steer us?

Take what hypothesis you will; either that there is no God, but that all things come to pass by chance, or inevitable necessity; or, that there is a God, but

that God having once put things into this frame, never meant to trouble himself more about them, but left them to shift for themselves, natural events falling out from necessary causes, and civil affairs being left to mankind, who are to shuffle and divide the world among themselves as well as they can: I say, proceed which way you will, if you exclude God Almighty's government, you make this world so dark and miserable a place, that no serious considering man can tolerably enjoy himself in it.

For here, upon the former supposition, you are left without counsel or advice. You have nothing to purpose, nothing to design in the course of your lives. It is all one how you behave yourselves, whether honestly or wickedly; whether you mind your business, or mind it not, for the event will be the same. You are obliged to no-body for any benefits; you can complain of no-body for any ill usage. If you be in ill circumstances, you have none to apply to for remedy, and if you be in good ones, you may be stript of them without remedy the next moment; for all things are carried on by a whirl of fate.

And you are not much better'd by the latter hypothesis, that God hath trusted the government of the world with mankind, who are endowed with reason and understanding.

For, if we consider how mankind do sometimes use their reasons, it is as good, if not better, to be exposed to the hazards of chance or necessity, as to be subject to their wills.

The truth of it is, if this system of the world be well consider'd, it will appear a more uncomfortable one than the other; for it doth not remove from us the iron bands of fate, we are still under that yoke, as much

much as we were before. Yet, beſides theſe, it puts upon us another yoke, the arbitrary pleaſures of thoſe of our own kind, which, if they be not govern'd by reaſon, are ten times more unſupportable than the other.

We are, by this hypotheſis, as much expoſed to natural evils, as we were before, and there is no help for them; but, over and above, we muſt bear the indignities and inſolences, the ravages and cruelty of every one that is ſtronger than ourſelves, and hath the will to oppreſs us.

O hard lot of mankind, if this was their conſtitution! better by far were it for them to be brutes, and think of nothing, than to be men, upon ſuch terms as theſe.

Happy therefore are the inhabitants of the earth, happy are the remoteſt iſles thereof, that there is a king that reigns both over fate and men. Happy are we, that there is a wiſe and intelligent Being, that ſuperintends all our affairs, and ſo governs both the powers of nature, and the powers of mankind; that nothing can be done by either of them, but what is deſigned by, and purſuant to his counſels.

Upon this ſuppoſition, we may live like men, and enjoy ourſelves with ſome comfort in this world. We may propoſe ends and deſigns to ourſelves, and hope that with our diligence and good management they may take effect.

Upon this ſuppoſition we may and ought to look upon all our good ſucceſſes, as the bleſſings of God to us, and particularly that which we are this day met together to thank him for; I mean, the wonderful preſervation of his majeſty, from all the dangers to

which he hath so often been exposed, and his safe return to us.

Upon this supposition we may hope, that tho' all things have not succeeded according to our wishes, yet in due time they may, since the king of the world hath by the frequent and unexpected deliverances he hath wrought for us, and the strange unusual providences that have attended our king, given us some encouragement to believe (provided we do our parts towards it) that he hath reserved us for better times, and him for the executing those glorious designs, which good men hope will at last be accomplished in the world.

Lastly, upon this supposition, every honest man will find reason enough, both to bear contentedly whatever uneasy circumstances he lies under, and to trust in God's mercy for the removal of them; and in the mean time to possess his own soul, in a chearful dependance on God's providence, and a hearty thankfulness for all the innumerable blessings he hath receiv'd, and doth daily receive from his hands. And, therefore, since *the Lord is king, let the earth be glad; yea, let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof.*

Now, that the Lord is really thus the king of the world, there are all the arguments to persuade us, that can be desired:

It is the voice of reason; it is the voice of all mankind; it is the voice of God himself, both in his works, and in his word.

Give me leave to give you a specimen in all these ways of arguing, and but a specimen, because it would be rather the work of a book, than of a sermon, to dilate upon these matters.

First,

Firſt, I ſay, reaſon tells us it muſt be thus: For admitting that the world did not make itſelf, but was made by God; it will follow, that the ſame God that made it, muſt ſtill govern it; for, the ſame ends, and deſigns, and motives (whatever they were) that induced God to make the world at firſt, will oblige him for ever to take care of it, and look after it. Unleſs we ſuppoſe God to contrive and act as uncertainly and unſteadily, and with the ſame inconſtancy and levity of mind, that ſome of us mortals here upon earth do.

Secondly, It is the voice of all mankind; for otherwiſe how comes it to paſs, that, among all nations, and in all ages, there has been ſome religion or other practiſed.

I pray, what is the meaning of worſhipping God, of putting up prayers and ſupplications to him for the things we need; of returning thanks for the benefits we have received; of appointing religious rites and methods for the expiation of guilt, or the averting of impendent calamities (all which things have been practiſed in all nations, from the beginning of the world to this day;) I ſay, what is the meaning of all this, unleſs it was hereby meant to be ſignified, that there is a God who concerns himſelf in the affairs of mankind, and who doth diſpenſe good or evil to them, as they well or ill behave themſelves towards him?

The truth is, to ſay, that God doth not govern the world, is to ſay, that all religion is a cheat; and, that all mankind, except a few debauch'd wits in the moſt polite countries, and a few brutes in the very barbarous ones (who are of no religion at all) have been, and are a company of credulous fools. For this is certain, whatever argument, either Jew, or Turk, or Pagan, or Chriſtian, can ſuggeſt to himſelf, for the

convincing him, that it is his concernment, or his duty, to worſhip God, or to be of any religion at all, nay, or to make any conſcience of any action he does; I ſay, all theſe arguments do not only prove, but ſuppoſe, that God both knows and orders the affairs of the world.

Thirdly, It may likewiſe be as ſtrongly proved from effects; from the tracks and footſteps of a divine overruling providence, which are to be ſeen in the events that happen in the world, which is what I call the voice of God in his works.

Theſe are indeed ſo many, and ſo viſible, that whoſoever hath either read hiſtory, or hath made obſervations, muſt needs have taken notice of them.

If ever there were any extraordinary deliverances vouchſafed to kingdoms, or cities, or particular perſons, or ever any remarkable judgments inflicted upon any of theſe, which ſo carried the marks and ſignatures of God's hand in them, that the one could not in reaſon but be attributed to the care that he had, that religion or innocence ſhould not be oppreſſed; and the other muſt in reaſon be interpreted as a divine vengeance, that purſued the guilty for their crimes:

If ever there were any prophecies that did punctually foretell a particular event that came not to paſs till many years after, and ſuch an event as was perfectly contingent, and depended upon the wills of men:

If ever there were any notices given of approaching calamities, by voices from heaven, by ſtrange appearances in the air, and ſuch other like preſages, not naturally to be accounted for:

If ever there were any apparitions, any witchcraft, any effects of a diabolical power, by which it may appear, that there are a ſort of inviſible beings in the world,

world, which do bear ill-will to mankind, but yet are so curbed, that they cannot do all the mischief they would:

If ever there were any miracles wrought either by Moses and the prophets, or by Jesus Christ and his apostles, for the confirmation of the jewish or the christian religion:

Lastly, If ever any good man did receive any blessing, or avoid any misfortune, which he might rationally look upon as an answer to the fervent prayers that he had put up to God, or others had put up for him:

I say, if any of these things that I have now named be true (as all histories give us a world of instances of the truth of all of them; and as for some of them, I do not doubt but they fall within the compass of our own observation and experience;) I say, if any of these things be true, then have we a convincing proof, that there is a power that doth interpose in the affairs of the world, superior both to that of nature, and to that of mankind, and which moderates all things according as it seems good unto him.

But in truth, we need not go to supernatural events, or to particular providences, for the truth of this: For, in my opinion, the daily effects that every one of us sees and feels; the very subsistance of the world for so many ages, in that regular frame that it was at first; and the fair treatment and encouragement (how unequally soever things seem to be distributed) which virtuous and religious men have always found, and do yet find, notwithstanding that far the greatest number of men are of another stamp: I say, these very things seem an argument beyond exception, that there is a God that presides over us, and takes care of us.

But,

But, fourthly and laſtly, God has yet given us a further proof of this, by his own many authentic declarations in the holy ſcriptures (which we call his word.)

One of the main buſineſſes of which is, to aſſure us, that *he rules in the kingdoms of men* [a], and diſpoſeth of all their affairs.

There he is ſet forth as the author of all events, both good and bad; ſo that *no evil happens in a city, but the Lord doth it* [b].

There he is repreſented as the ſearcher of all hearts, the judge of all mens deſigns and actions, the avenger of all evil practices, and the refuge of all good men.

There we are told, that *he is the God of battles*, and that *no king is ſaved by the multitude of his armies; nor any mighty man delivered by his own ſtrength: but ſalvation is from the Lord* [c]. And ſo are diſappointments.

There we are aſſured, that *he from his habitation looketh down upon all that dwell on the earth. He faſhioneth the hearts of them; he underſtandeth all their ways* [d]. *And though many are the devices that are in their hearts, yet it is his counſel only that ſhall ſtand* [e].

In a word, it is God (as the apoſtle tells us) that *worketh all things* [f], and he worketh them all *according to the counſel of his own will.* So that nothing comes by chance, nothing is done in vain; but all events are in purſuance of a deſign.

Nay, not ſo much as the event of caſting a lot (which ſeems the moſt fortuitous, contingent thing in the whole world) is left at random: for even in that caſe, *the diſpoſal of the lot* (as Solomon tells us, Prov. xvi. 33.) *is from the Lord.*

All

[a] Dan. iv. 17. [b] Amos iii. 6. [c] Pſ. xxxiii. 16. [d] Pſ. xxxiii. 14. [e] Prov. xix. 21, [f] Eph. i. 11.

All this is not only the doctrine, but in a great measure the very language and expreſſion of theſe holy books. And what can we deſire more? or what words can we invent, that ſhall declare more fully the thing we are ſpeaking of?

None can, that I know of, except perhaps thoſe of our Saviour, with which I ſhall ſhut up this point. *Fear not*, (ſaith he to his diſciples) *are not two ſparrows ſold for a farthing? Yet not one of them falls to the ground without the will of your Father. Nay, I ſay unto you, the very hairs of your head are all numbered*[ε]. O wonderful this! what! God Almighty number the very hairs of our head! *Lord, what is man, that thou ſhouldeſt have ſuch reſpect unto him?* and do that for him, which even the niceſt, and moſt delicate of men never yet did for themſelves? But thus art thou pleaſed to expreſs thy particular regard to the ſons of men. Thus art thou pleaſed to let us ſee that none of us are ſo inconſiderable, but that we are within the verge of thy providence, and objects of thy care. And therefore much more are cities, and ſtates, and kingdoms ſo, wherein the fortunes of ſo many individuals are wrapt up.

O, bleſſed be God, for his love to mankind! O, for ever adored be his name, for thus humbling himſelf to take notice of us and our affairs, and likewiſe for giving us ſuch abundant aſſurance that he doth ſo! Since therefore we have ſuch mighty evidence of all ſorts, that *the Lord is king, let the earth be glad; yea, let the multitudes of the iſles be glad thereof.*

And we ſhall ſtill ſee greater reaſon thus to be glad, if we conſider a little more particularly the rules and meaſures by which God adminiſters the affairs of his king-

[ε] Matt. x, 29.

kingdom: Which are not, as too often happens in human governments, arbitrary will or humour, but perfect wisdom, and justice, and goodness.

Tho' it be true what the Psalmist saith, that *whatsoever the Lord pleaseth, that doth he in heaven and in earth, and in the sea, and all deep places* [h]: yet it is as true, that the Lord will never be pleased to do any thing, either in heaven or in earth, but what is suggested by infinite goodness, and in such ways as are the result of infinite wisdom. For as the same Psalmist tells us, *he loveth righteousness and judgment; the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord* [i]. *He is holy in all his ways, and righteous in all his doings: and his tender mercies are over all his works* [k].

To say, that God deals arbitrarily with any of his creatures; or that he dispenseth good or evil to them, meerly because he will, without any other reason, is in truth to disparage his nature, and gives us such a notion of him, as we have perhaps of some of the great monarchs of the world, but whom we are far from esteeming the best men.

No, certainly, if we, mankind, find in ourselves, that the wiser and better we grow, the less we are led by humour and will, and the more do we shake off our indifferency to good and evil, and the more steadily do we cleave to the eternal laws of reason and righteousness in all our actions; we may be sure that God, who is wisdom, and justice, and goodness itself, can never, in any of his actions or dealings with his creatures, depart from these principles.

The true scheme of God Almighty's government, is plainly this;

His

[h] Ps. cxxxv. 6. [i] Ps. xxxiii. 5. [k] Ps. cxlv. 17. 9.

His infinite mind clearly underſtood all the poſſibilities of things, long before they were in actual being. He knew what things were poſſible to be; and how they would act if they were put into being; and what the events of all their actings would be.

His infinite goodneſs moved him to put into actual being every thing that he ſaw was good to be; and to give them all thoſe powers of action that they have; and withal, to look after them ſo, as that both they, and all their motions and actions ſhould at laſt be to the praiſe and glory of the ſame goodneſs, that firſt inclined him to create them.

His infinite wiſdom contrived the methods in which all this ſhould be brought to paſs, and ſo laid the ſcheme and platform of things, that nothing could happen in the whole creation, from the beginning of the world to the end thereof, (tho' it was in itſelf never ſo bad, never ſo miſchievous) but what both might, and ſhould be ſo ordered, as to be ſubſervient to that end.

And laſtly, The ſcheme of things being thus laid, his infinite power firſt produced all things, and ſtill upholds all things, and from time to time in their ſeveral ſeaſons actually brings to paſs every thing, according to the determinations of his eternal wiſdom. And tho' it doth it in ways ſecret to us, yet it doth it certainly and ſurely, and withal, moſt eaſily and gently, with the leaſt violence to the eſtabliſh'd laws of nature, and without any force at all upon the free wills of intelligent beings.

This, I ſay, is the account that both reaſon and ſcripture give us of God's making and governing the world. Infinite knowledge is the foundation of all. Infinite goodneſs is the author and mover of all. Infinite

finite wisdom is the contriver and director of all; and infinite power executes all.

Admit now these principles, and see what will follow from them.

It will follow from hence, in the first place, that every event that happens in the world, is beautiful in its season, as Solomon expresses it. That is to say, how unaccountable soever it may appear to us, yet there is a good reason to be given, both why it happens at all; and likewise why it happens at that time, and with those circumstances that it doth. It helps to adorn the great drama and contrivance of God's providence, and ministers to excellent ends, tho' we, poor creatures, do little apprehend how it makes for them; as indeed it is impossible we should, unless we had the whole comprehension of things in our minds, and saw the entire scheme of God's government, from the beginning to the end. This must needs be so, if we be govern'd by infinite wisdom.

Secondly, It follows from hence, that both good and evil are measured to mankind according to their respective capacities. If we be fit for good, good will come. If we deserve punishment, we must expect that likewise. For all God's ways are equal, though ours be unequal.

And therefore it is the most unreasonable thing in the world to impute our successes, whether they be good or bad, so wholly to the immediate hands that managed our affairs, as not in the first place to take notice of the hand of God in them.

There is a divine power that governs all these matters. And tho' it be true, that no misfortune, no ill success ever happens, but there is a human reason to be given for it; and it may be found out upon what occasion,

occaſion, or by what neglect, or thro' what ill management that misfortune happened; yet it is as true, that if thoſe that managed for us had the wiſdom, and the conduct, and the ſtrength of the very angels of God, yet their endeavours would not be effectual, for the making us happy, unleſs we ourſelves were in a capacity of being ſo, by being proper objects of God's mercy and favour. This muſt likewiſe be true, if perfect juſtice govern the world.

Thirdly, It follows from hence, that even the ſeverer diſpenſations of God's providence towards us; the things we complain of, and are uneaſy under; our very calamities, and misfortunes, and diſappointments; even theſe are the effects of Gods kindneſs, though at the ſame time they may be likewiſe inſtances of his juſtice: That is to ſay, they are meant really for our good, and will prove ſo, if we make that uſe of them we ſhould do.

The very nature of God is to do all good, at all times, to all his creatures. For, he had no other end in making them, nor has he any other end in looking after them: But God cannot do good to all in the ſame way. Corrections, and chaſtiſement, and puniſhment, is in ſome caſes more expedient for the bringing people to rights, and promoting their true intereſts, than the giving them all that their own hearts can wiſh. In ſuch caſes therefore God muſt deal with his creatures, as every wiſe parent deals with his children. And though *theſe chaſtiſements* (as the apoſtle tells us) *are not joyous, but grievous*, yet are they deſign'd for *the bringing forth the peaceable fruits of righteouſneſs in all them that are exerciſed thereby.*

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The truth is, we do not know what is good for ourselves. We often wish for things, that perhaps, if our wishes were granted, would undo us: But our happiness is, that God knows all, and so tempers all, that all events, even those that we are apt to look upon as the greatest judgment, shall at last appear more visibly to have been the wisest methods that could possibly have been contrived for the doing the greatest good to us. And if they do not succeed accordingly, it will be our own fault.

This must likewise needs be true, if perfect goodness govern all: For even justice itself is but a different way of expressing goodness. And all that which we call judgment, and vengeance, is unaccountable, unless it serve for the doing good to the world.

Fourthly and lastly, From hence it follows, that all events whatsoever, that ever did, or do, or shall happen in the world, either with respect to nations, and kingdoms, or with respect to particular persons, are really the best that could, or can happen. And if things were ordered otherwise, it would not be so well.

A strange paradox you will say this is; that not only the mischiefs and calamities that fall upon mankind, but even their faults and mismanagements, nay, their very sins and wickednesses, should be for the best. But really so it is, and so it must be, if both infinite wisdom, and goodness, and power govern the world.

Not, but that a particular man's sins may be the occasion of his ruin, nay and certainly will be so, if he persist in them.

And likewise the faults of a people may, and will have such an ill influence upon the community, as, if they

they be not amended, the desolation of the nation may at last ensue thereupon.

But still, though every thing that happens do not prove for the good of that particular person, or that particular people, that is immediately concerned in the event; yet it will certainly prove for the general universal good.

So that, take all the whole series of events together that have, or shall come to pass all the world over, we may undoubtedly affirm, that all things have been as well managed, as it is possible they could be; and will be so to the end of the world: And this we ourselves shall be satisfied of, when we come to be in a condition of making a just estimate of things.

For, indeed, to suppose otherwise, is to say, either that infinite wisdom doth not act so wisely as it might do; or that perfect goodness might do more good than it does do; or, lastly, that omnipotent power cannot do every thing that is possible. All which suppositions are plainly absurd and contradictious.

And now, if all these things be true (as they certainly are) how natural is the conclusion of my text? Since God is the king of all the world, and such a king likewise, that the measures of his government are exact goodness, and wisdom, and righteousness; what have all mankind to do, especially good men, but to rejoice and be glad?

This is the Psalmist's inference from this doctrine. And this is the present business of the day: And therefore let us all practise accordingly. That is the only application I desire to make of what hath been said.

And two ways we ought to express our rejoicing.

First,

Firſt, In a hearty ſenſe of all God's paſt and preſent mercies to us, and an actual giving him our thanks for the ſame.

Secondly, In a chearful dependance upon him for his future bleſſings. Give me leave to ſpeak a little to theſe two points, and I have done.

Firſt, Let us be heartily ſenſible of all God's kindneſs to us, both paſt and preſent, and unfeignedly thank him for the ſame.

It is very remarkable, that not only David, but the prophets likewiſe, when they are treating of God's kingdom, call upon the iſles in a particular manner to take notice of it; [See Iſa. xxiv. 15, 42, 4, 10, &c.] as here in my text, *let the multitudes of the iſles be glad thereof:* As if the iſles in a more particular manner were to have a ſhare in the bleſſings of his government. And, no doubt, it was ſo intended, and accordingly it hath ſo come to paſs. For it is the iſles of the gentiles, by which name the ſcripture expreſſeth thoſe countries that were at the greateſt diſtance from the continent of Judea; I ſay, it is theſe iſles, which now, at this day (God's ancient people the Jews being for their infidelity long ago rejected) are the principal ſeat of his church and kingdom, and to which he vouchſafeth the light of his goſpel, and the means of ſalvation; ſo true is God to all his promiſes.

But now, of all the iſles of the gentiles, if any one above the reſt hath felt the benign and gracious influences of the Lord's being our king, certainly ours is that iſland.

How wonderfully bountiful hath God been to us in a continued ſucceſſion of public bleſſings, even from the firſt beginning of time, that we have had any memorials of events among us?

We

We had the happineſs to be early made a province of the Roman empire, and by that means were trained up to civility, and arts, and good manners.

That made way for the greateſt bleſſing that heaven could beſtow upon us, even the receiving chriſtianity: and that bleſſing we had with the moſt early, being the firſt among the nations that embraced it.

When, through the juſt judgment of God, barbariſm and ignorance overſpread the face of Europe, and by the occaſion thereof ſuperſtition and idolatry made its way, and all the weſtern kingdoms gave up their power to a foreign uſurper; even then this iſland made the longeſt ſtand; nay, and was never ſo perfectly ſubdued, but that popery was here a different thing, from what it was in the ſouthern climates.

When the happy time came, that God thought fit to ſet on foot the reformation (having firſt made way for it, by the reſtoring of learning) ſuch was his particular care of us, that this was one of the firſt kingdoms that was brought over to it.

And we have this advantage above all other reformed churches, that as our reformation was regularly made, and by juſt authority, ſo it was made moſt agreeably to the pattern of the primitive churches of Chriſt.

And, God be thanked, according to the goodneſs of it, ſuch hath been its ſucceſs ever ſince; for we have all along, from that time to this, (except the interruption of a few years in the late times) ſerved God in peace and happineſs, under the ſame eſtabliſhment; and we truſt we ſhall do ſo to the end of the world.

Many, indeed, have been the oppoſitions and diſturbances, that have been given us by our adverſaries, both at home and abroad: But as manifold likewiſe

have been our deliverances, and that in a moſt wonderful manner.

I need not mention them, for they are known to us all.

How many ſecret conſpiracies againſt our proteſtant kings and queens, hath God Almighty's mercy detected and defeated?

How many open attempts againſt our laws, and againſt our religion, hath he, by ſtrange providences, brought to nought?

More than once hath he by wonderful methods preſerved us, when we gave up our church and our liberties in a manner as loſt, and that in ſo eaſy and quiet a way, that there was no concuſſion of the nation followed thereupon.

Are not theſe extraordinary inſtances of God's kindneſs to a people? And ought not we, who have received, and do yet enjoy the benefit and the comfort of them, to remember them with thankfulneſs all the days of our life?

But ſome of us, perhaps, are not now in a humour to think of theſe things; our preſent circumſtances fill our minds, and thoſe are difficult enough. Let our paſt deliverances have been what they will, yet we are ſure we are now in a hazardous condition, notwithſtanding all the prayers we have put up for better ſucceſſes.

That is too true: And I pray God make us all ſenſible of it; and eſpecially make us ſenſible of the things that have cauſed it, namely, our ingratitude for God's former mercies; our lewdneſs and debauchery; the ſpirit of atheiſm and profaneneſs and irreligion, that ſtill reigns among us as much as ever; and above all, our unaccountable dividing ourſelves into parties, and

purſuing

purſuing particular piques and quarrels, not only to the neglect, but to the plain ruin of our common intereſts.

Theſe are the things that have hindered our ſucceſſes, and provoked God's diſpleaſure againſt us; and till theſe things be amended, I am afraid we ſhall never be a happy nation.

But yet, notwithſtanding our high provocations, ſo gently hath God corrected us, and even in his judgments ſo much hath he remember'd mercy, that we have all reaſon to rejoice at the benignity and kindneſs of his diſpenſations towards us; nay, and to render him our moſt hearty and ſolemn thanks for the mercies that he hath beſtowed upon us, even with reſpect to the matters we complain of.

For God hath really ſo far heard our prayers this year, that he hath given us the moſt important ſucceſſes, tho' not the ſucceſſes we deſired.

He hath kept the war at a diſtance from us: And we have, under the happy government of her majeſty, lived free from all diſturbance at home; every man *ſitting under his own vine, and his own fig-tree*, (as the prophet ſpeaks) enjoying his religion and rights in perfect peace; and with a bountiful proviſion likewiſe, from God's hand, of all the things that were either needful or convenient.

And as for our ſucceſſes abroad, tho' it is not proper for me to talk of thoſe matters, yet I believe thus much I may decently and truly ſay, that tho' the king had not the victory, being over-power'd by numbers, yet he gained more honour, and ſuſtained leſs loſs, than thoſe that boaſted of the victory.

And, which is yet more, God hath not only preſerved his perſon, amidſt the infinite hazards he was

continually expoſed to, and returned him ſafe to us; but returned him likewiſe with ſuch reputation for his courage, and vigilance, and conduct in the difficulties he had to ſtruggle with, as hath gained him the higheſt eſteem among his enemies, and therefore ought much more to endear him to his own ſubjects.

And now, let all this be conſidered, and then let any man ſay, that really loves the intereſt of his country, whether we have not reaſon to look upon theſe things as great bleſſings; and as ſuch, to return our ſolemn thanks to God for them.

And then, in the ſecond place, as to our future ſucceſſes, let us all chearfully depend upon God's providence, and truſt in his mercy for them.

This is all the rejoicing we can expreſs as to future things; and this is that which the apoſtle calls rejoicing in hope.

And ſurely great reaſon have we thus to do, when we conſider who it is that orders our affairs; one, whoſe kindneſs we have no reaſon to doubt of, having had ſo many experiences of it, even beyond our hopes and expectations: And one likewiſe upon whoſe power we may ſecurely depend, ſince his arm is not ſhortened, nor ever can be, how much ſoever our arm of fleſh may be.

God Almighty is our king, and he both certainly knows, and will certainly do, that which is beſt for us, provided we take care to do that which becomes us.

Away therefore with all fear, and diſtruſt, and deſpondency; it is an argument of infidelity and irreligion, as well as cowardice, to deſpair of the commonwealth.

We are in as good hands as it is poſſible for us to be: Nay, we ourſelves cannot wiſh to be in any other.

Let

Let us do our parts, by qualifying ourſelves for God's mercies; and that is to be done by contributing our beſt endeavours, every man in his place and ſtation, to the ſervice of the public; and then we may ſafely *caſt all our care upon him who careth for us*, and we may be ſure we ſhall not be diſappointed.

This method, as it is much more eaſy, ſo we ſhall find it much more conducing towards the obtaining the ſucceſſes we deſire, than complaining and fretfulneſs, and a tormenting anxiety about our affairs.

We may, indeed, by our peeviſh and querulous humour, diſquiet ourſelves, and put others into a ferment, nay, and at laſt, perhaps, may contribute a great deal to the glory of hindering and defeating the moſt wiſe counſels, that are propoſed for our ſafety; but that is the greateſt point we gain.

God Almighty will not alter his methods, for any of our fooliſh paſſions; but there is a way to prevail upon God himſelf, to do for us all that our own hearts can deſire, provided that which we deſire be good for us, and that way is, to own him and his government; to love him, and to ſerve him; to be thankful for his mercies; to be eaſy and chearful under all his diſpenſations to us; and laſtly, to refer ourſelves entirely to his wiſe counſels, and to truſt in his mercy for all that is to come.

Great, indeed, and wonderful, are the promiſes that are made to thoſe that put their truſt in God. *Curſed* (ſaith the prophet) *be the man that truſteth in man, and maketh fleſh his arm:* But, *Bleſſed is he that truſteth in the Lord, and whoſe hope the Lord is*[1]. *Many ſorrows* (ſaith the Pſalmiſt) *ſhall be to the wicked: But whoſo truſteth in the Lord, mercy ſhall em-*

[1] Jer. xvii. 5,

brace him on every side. [m] And again, *O taste and see how gracious the Lord is: Blessed is the man that trusteth in him* [n].

If we now believe these things, (and if we be christians, we do and must believe them) consider, I beseech you, the use we are to make of them.

What have we all to do? Let our late disappointments have put us into never so bad a humour; let our present circumstances be entangled with never so many difficulties; yet what have we all to do but to rejoice in God, and to trust in his mercy?

All is well, and all will be well for ever, to them that love God, and put their trust in him.

Sing we therefore unto the Lord a new song: Let the congregation of saints praise him. Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: And let the children of Sion be joyful in their king. God is the king of all the earth, let us sing praises with understanding. The Lord hath pleasure in his people: He will for ever help the meek-hearted: For his delight is in them that fear him, and that put their trust in his mercy. He is our help and strength, a very present help in trouble; therefore will we not fear, though the earth be moved, and tho' the hills be c ried into the midst of the sea: Tho' the waters ther of rage and swell, and the mountains shake at the tempest of the same. Even, in that case, *the rivers of the flood thereof shall make glad the city of God.* All the blusterings and storms that threaten God's people, shall turn to their advantage, and shall really at length prove matter of rejoicing to them, how terrible and dreadful soever they appeared at first: For, as it there follows, *God is in the midst of her, therefore shall she not be removed: God will help her, and that right*

[m] Psal. xxxii. 10. [n] Psal. xxxiv. 8.

right early. God will be with his church, and will deliver his people, whenever it is proper and seasonable so to do.

Nay, let the worst come; though we were reduced even to the utmost extremities, which, yet, God be thanked, we neither are, nor, I hope, ever shall be; yet even in that case, the consideration that God is our king, ought not only to support us, but to fill us with joy. Even in that case, every good man should bear his part in the song of the prophet Habakkuk (iii. 17.) with which I conclude.

Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine: Although the labour of the olive shall fail; and the fields shall yield no meat: Although the flock be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

SERMON XIV.

Of the government of the thoughts.

PROV. iv. 23.

Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.

THE argument with which this audience was entertained the last Lord's-day, being the government of the tongue, I cannot think it improper or unseasonable for me, who have the honour to come next, to treat about the government of the thoughts; there being a near relation between these two, and a necessary dependance of the one upon the other.

Our words, indeed, are more easily governed than our thoughts, because they are more in our power. But it will be impossible either to govern our words, or our actions, as we should, unless we first bring our thoughts in some measure under government.

I must

I muſt confeſs, this argument of the government of the thoughts, though it be a very uſeful, yet it ſeems alſo a very nice and difficult one, through the great variety of caſes ariſing from mens different tempers, which will not come under the ſame rules, and yet ought to be provided for. But however, this ſhall not diſcourage me from undertaking this argument; it ſhall only make me more careful as to what I ſay about it; that is, to have reſpect, as much as I can, to all ſorts of tempers, and to deliver what I have to ſay, with ſo much plainneſs, that every body may go along with me.

The words, upon which I ground my diſcourſe, are thoſe of Solomon, which I have read unto you, and which contain one of thoſe precepts that he lays down for the religious conduct of our lives: *Keep* (ſaith he) *thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the iſſues of life.*

Not to trouble you with what others have ſaid upon this text, I take the true meaning of it to be this;

By the [heart] here, which we are exhorted to keep, we are to underſtand the inward thoughts, and motions, and affections of our ſouls or ſpirits; all which, in the inſpired writings, are conſtantly ſaid to be ſeated in the heart. This undoubtedly is the ſcripture-notion of the heart.

And, when we are here bid to *keep our hearts with all diligence*, I think there is no queſtion to be made, the meaning is, that we ſhould diligently attend to the thoughts, and motions, and affections of our minds; that we ſhould watch them narrowly, leſt at any time we ſhould give our conſent to ſomething we ought not. This is the meaning of *keeping our hearts with all diligence.*

And then a reaſon is added, why it concerns us thus to keep them; and that is this, becauſe *out of the heart are the iſſues of life.* What is the meaning of that phraſe? Plainly this; the iſſues, the fruits, the effects that are ſhewn in our lives and converſation, do certainly proceed from the heart, and therefore, accordingly as that is well or ill guarded or kept, ſo will our lives and converſations be. The goodneſs or badneſs of our lives doth altogether depend upon the attending or not attending to the thoughts, and motions, and inclinations of our minds. As our caution and watchfulneſs in this point, is greater or leſs, ſo will our courſe of life be better or worſe. And therefore it concerns us all, that mean to live well, to be infinitely careful in this matter.

This is a plain account of the advice that is here given us. So that you ſee, if I mean to diſcourſe pertinently to my text, my argument muſt be (what I ſaid) the care, and management, and government of our thoughts, as they fall under a religious conſideration.

In treating of this argument, there ſeems to me two things needful to be done:

Firſt, To give an account what power a man hath over his own thoughts.

Secondly, To ſhew wherein the art of governing of them doth conſiſt.

It is, indeed, this ſecond thing which my text naturally leads me to ſpeak to: But I cannot ſpeak to that to any purpoſe, 'till I have made way for it by clearing the firſt. It is in vain to give rules about the government of our thoughts, 'till we know how far we have the power over them; how far they fall, or do not fall, under our conduct and management.

And

And I muſt needs ſay, that moſt of thoſe I have met with, that have diſcourſed about the government of thoughts, by not enquiring into and ſettling this point, have been ſo far from benefitting all their hearers, that deſired to receive benefit by their good advices, that to ſeveral of them they have done harm: Becauſe as to them their advices have been perfectly unpracticable. Now thoſe that by their own experience found them to be ſo, inſtead of conſidering that that teacher might be in a miſtake, or that he did not ſufficiently weigh and examine the caſe of all perſons he gave his advice to, have peremptorily concluded that they themſelves were in the fault, and therefore they were in an evil condition; becauſe they found themſelves not able to live up to what was adviſed them.

The firſt queſtion then is, how a man hath power over his own thoughts? There is not, indeed, any ſingle anſwer to be given to this queſtion, that will fit all men; for that is impoſſible. It would be as unreaſonable to demand it, as it would be to require of a workman to make a garment, that ſhould fit all ſorts and ſizes of men.

Some men, by the very principles of their make and conſtitution, are much better able to govern their thoughts than others. Some that are naturally weaker, have, by long uſe, and many trials, obtained a greater power over their thoughts than others. Again, the ſame perſons, that, at ſome times, have a greater power over the motions of their minds, may, at other times, have a leſs command over them; and this according as their health, or their buſineſs, or a hundred contingencies of outward things do affect them. So that all that can be done, as to this matter, is to lay down ſome general propoſitions which every body is

to apply to himself, as there is occasion. And five of this kind I have to offer, and which, I think, will take in all, or the greatest part of what belongs to this argument.

The first proposition I lay down is this, That the first motions of our minds are very little, if at all, in our power.

By the first motions of our minds, I mean those sudden thoughts, or apprehensions, or passions, or desires, which are excited in our minds, by any object, that is at that time presented to our imagination: As to these, I say, we are not so much masters of ourselves, as to be able to stop them; nay, though, perhaps, they be very irregular. And the reason is, because they are produced so quick, that there is not time enough given for reason to interpose.

There is no necessity, indeed, that a man should give consent to these motions; but as for their coming into his mind, he can no more help it, than he can help his present temper, or the present circumstances he is engaged in.

Thus for instance; do you think it possible for a man that is of a fiery passionate temper, to avoid the feeling a sudden resentment of anger arising in his mind, if he meets with any unexpected affront, or other great provocation? Or, for a man that desires to be well thought of, not to entertain some vanity of imagination, when he hears himself commended or flatter'd? Or, for a man that is addicted to pleasures, not to feel some irregular inclinations in himself towards the gratifying his appetites in those things, when he hath all the temptations before him? And thus in all other cases.

I grant, indeed, that a man by long consideration, and a serious exercising himself in the ways of virtue

and

and piety, may bring himſelf to that temper, that he ſhall not have ſo many irregular, undecent motions in his own mind, upon any occaſion whatſoever, as he was wont to have; and that thoſe that were formerly temptations to him, will at laſt be none: But ſtill, I ſay, the firſt motions and workings of his mind, however they be occaſioned, are in a great meaſure out of his power; he cannot ſtop them; and therefore the art of governing his thoughts, doth not lie there.

The ſecond propoſition I lay down is this, When a man's mind is vigorouſly affected and poſſeſſed, either with the outward objects of ſenſe, or with the inward paſſions of any kind, in that caſe he hath little or no command of his thoughts: his mind at that time will be in a manner wholly taken up with what it is then full of: nor will he be able, till thoſe impreſſions be worn off, to think freely of what he pleaſeth.

Thus for inſtance, when a man is under a ſharp tormenting pain; as he cannot avoid the feeling of that pain, ſo neither can he avoid the thinking of it. When one is full of grief for the loſs of a dear relation, or tranſported with paſſion for ſome unworthy uſage he hath met with; it is in vain to ſay, pray think not of theſe matters; for theſe things muſt, and will, in a great meaſure, employ his thoughts, till his paſſions do cool, and the impreſſions that cauſed them, be vaniſhed.

Thus, for a man to come from ſome buſineſs in which he is more than ordinarily concerned; or from the hearing ſome very good or very bad news: I ſay, to come freſh from this to the ſaying his prayers; I do not, I cannot wonder, that in this caſe his mind will be much upon his buſineſs, or his news, notwithſtanding all his endeavours to the contrary.

For the nature of man is ſuch, that he cannot ſo on a ſudden, turn his mind from one buſineſs to another; but that if he did cloſely and vigorouſly apply himſelf to the firſt buſineſs, his thoughts will for ſome time run upon it, even after he hath applied his mind to the other.

I do not deny, but that a man may often ſo order his affairs, as to be able to keep his mind clear and free from ſuch prepoſſeſſions as I am now ſpeaking of, ſo as that when he comes to apply himſelf to any buſineſs he hath a mind to, he may intend it with his whole might. But this I ſay, if our minds be once engaged with warm thoughts about any thing; it is very hard, if not impoſſible, to get them diſengaged on a ſudden. So that the art of governing our thoughts doth not much lie in that neither.

Thirdly, There are ſome caſes likewiſe, where a man's thoughts are in a manner forced upon him, from the preſent temper and indiſpoſition of his body. So that though he be in no paſſion, though there be no unuſual objects of ſenſe that excite thoſe thoughts in him; nay, though he never ſo much reſolve not to think upon thoſe things; yet ſo long as that habit of body laſts, he cannot avoid thoſe kind of thoughts; ſo that in this caſe alſo, there is little room left for the government of thoughts.

That which I now ſay happens frequently, not only in all ſorts of diſtempers where the brain is viſibly diſturbed, as in fevers, and the like; which often cauſe a thouſand delirious fancies, and ſometimes downright madneſs and diſtraction: but alſo in other caſes where there ſeems to be no fever, or other viſible diſtemper; nor doth the brain, as to other matters, ſeem to be at

all

all diſorder'd; but the perſons in all appearance, are ſound both in body and mind.

And this is the caſe of ſome deeply hypochondriac perſons; many of which will be haunted with a ſet of thoughts and fancies, that they can by no means get rid of, tho' they deſire it never ſo earneſtly.

Sometimes they cannot get it out of their heads, but that they are atheiſts and infidels, they neither believe in God, nor in Jeſus Chriſt, nor have any ſenſe at all of religion.

Sometimes they are tormented with blaſphemous thoughts, and they cannot ſet themſelves to the performance of any office of devotion, but a thouſand impious fancies will come in and ſpoil all.

Sometimes they fanſy they are guilty of ſeveral grievous crimes, which it is to be hoped, it was hardly poſſible they ſhould be guilty of; nay, you cannot convince them, but that they do every day commit ſome of theſe crimes, becauſe they imagine they give conſent to them.

And whilſt theſe ſorts of thoughts fill their imaginations, there is not a paſſage in the bible that they read, nor a ſermon that they hear, but they find ſomething in it, which they do ſo perverſly apply to their own caſe, as thereby to increaſe their trouble, but not to get any relief.

I have known ſeveral well-diſpoſed perſons, and ſome of them ſincerely pious, that have been in this condition.

What now is to be ſaid to this? Why, it is very certain that all theſe thoughts and fancies are thruſt upon them, and are not the free, natural, voluntary operations of their own minds; but the effects of vapours or hypochondriac melancholy. Nor can the

perſons

perſons themſelves any more help their thus thinking, or fancying, than they can help the diſturbances of their dreams, when they have a mind to ſleep quietly. Indeed we may properly enough call theſe fancies of theirs their waking dreams; as their dreams are their ſleeping fancies.

Well, but now of all perſons whatſoever, theſe people are moſt deſirous to have rules given them for the government of their thoughts. And I cannot blame them, becauſe their thoughts are certainly very troubleſome: But truly, if we ſhould ſpeak pertinently to their caſe, inſtead of giving them advices for the regulating their thoughts, they ſhould rather be adviſed to look after their bodies, and by the help of good preſcriptions to get rid of thoſe fumes and vapours, which occaſion theſe fancies. When the cauſe is removed, the effect will ſoon ceaſe. I do not in the leaſt doubt, whatever theſe people may think of their own caſe, but that this is as properly a bodily diſeaſe as a fever, or fits of the falling ſickneſs.

In the mean time, while they are in this condition, whatever rules are proper to be given to other perſons, for the government of the thoughts, of all people living, thoſe rules do the leaſt concern them. For thoſe thoughts which they complain of, do not at all fall under regulation or government; becauſe they are ſuggeſted to their minds, whether they will or no. And for my part, I think it a great deal more adviſeable (if it could be) to neglect and deſpiſe them; than to be perpetually ſtruggling and diſputing with them, and vexing themſelves about them.

But, you will ſay, if men be ſuch ſlaves to their thoughts and are thus neceſſarily paſſive under them, where is the freedom of thought? To this I anſwer,

In

In the fourth place, out of these three cases I before-mentioned, we have liberty of thinking, and may chuse our own thoughts. And that liberty and freedom we have in thinking, doth, to my apprehension, mainly consist in this, viz. That all of us (who are not in the circumstances I have been hitherto speaking of) can, if we please, apply our minds more vigorously to one sort of thing, than to another; and accordingly, as we do thus apply our minds, so will the most of our thoughts be.

It is in our power, among the multitude of objects, which present themselves to our mind, (as for instance, God, virtue, holiness, heaven, wealth, power, greatness, preferments, fine cloaths, splendid equipage, sensual pleasures, recreations, divertisements, knowledge, learning, arts, and the like;) I say, that among all this multitude of objects, that present themselves to our minds, it is in our power to determine ourselves, which of them we will dwell upon, and make a business of. And accordingly, when at any time we have pitched upon any of them, as a business, it is in our power to mind that business either more or less diligently. And if it be such an one, as that we mean in good earnest to concern ourselves about it, it will then so fill our minds, as that by attending to that, we shall either prevent, in a great measure, other thoughts from coming into our heads; or if they do come in, they will not long stay there, but will very speedily give place to that which is our main business at that time.

And the reason of this is plain; because our natures are of that make, that two things at once cannot well possess our minds; and therefore if we be intent about one thing, we cannot have much room or leisure for thoughts of another nature.

But

But then, fifthly and laſtly, Tho' this that I have ſaid, be the true nature of that power we have over our thoughts, as to the directing them to a particular object; yet there is another power we have over them, that ought here more eſpecially to be conſider'd; becauſe in it are laid the very foundations of virtue and vice, and upon account of it all our thoughts become either morally good or evil.

That which I mean is this; though we cannot in many caſes think always of what we would; nay, tho' we cannot hinder abundance of thoughts from coming into our minds againſt our will; yet it is always in our power to aſſent to our thoughts, or to deny our conſent to them. And here it is that the morality of our thoughts begins; according as we aſſent or diſſent to the motions that are made in our minds, ſo will our thoughts have the notions of virtuous or ſinful thoughts.

When any temptations are preſented to us from without, we cannot perhaps (as I ſaid before) avoid the feeling an irregular paſſion, or motion, or inclination ſtirring within us, upon occaſion thereof; but yet at that very time it is in our power, whether we will comply with thoſe paſſions and inclinations, or not; whether we will conſent to them, or not; whether we will purſue them further, or not. Now if we do not conſent to them, but endeavour to ſtop, and ſtifle, and reſiſt them, as ſoon as we are aware of them, there is yet no harm done. Our thoughts, how undecent or irregular ſoever they were, are rather to be accounted the infirmities of our corrupt nature, than our ſins properly ſo called.

And thus it is likewiſe as to our wandering thoughts in our prayers. If we ſtrive againſt them, and endeavour

deavour to keep our minds in a devout compoſed temper, and attend as well as we can to the duty we are about: I ſay, if we do, I hope thoſe diſtractions and wanderings will never riſe up in judgment againſt us.

And as for the frightful blaſphemous fancies, which, as I told you, ſome, even pious perſons, are tormented with; as to them, I ſay, they, of all other irregular thoughts, have the leaſt danger of ſin in them, tho' they be not ſo ſolemnly and formally diſputed with, and conteſted againſt. Becauſe, indeed, they are ſo terrible in their own nature, that no man in his wits, and that hath any ſenſe of God or goodneſs, can be ſuppoſed to conſent to them. They are, indeed, great infelicities, but by no means any ſin, any farther than we approve of them; and to approve of them, for any tolerable good man, is impoſſible.

But then, on the other ſide, if we conſent to any wicked motion or inclination that we feel in ourſelves, let it come in how it will, never ſo ſuddenly, never ſo unexpectedly, if we cloſe with any thought that prompts us to evil, ſo as to be pleaſed with it, to delight in it, to think of purſuing it, till it be brought into action: In that caſe we are no longer to plead our original corruption; for in that very inſtant we become actual ſinners, actual tranſgreſſors of the law of God, the obligation of which reaches to our very hearts and thoughts, as well as our actions. Tho' yet we are not ſo great tranſgreſſors, ſo long as our ſin is only in thought, or deſire, or purpoſe; as if it had proceeded to outward action.

All this is taught us for true divinity, by no leſs an author than St. James, in the firſt chapter of his epiſtle, v. 13, 14, 15. *Let no man ſay, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God tempteth no man,*

man. But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own luſt, and enticed. Then when luſt hath conceived, it bringeth forth ſin, and ſin, when it is finiſhed, bringeth forth death.

Which paſſage of the apoſtle doth plainly contain theſe three propoſitions:

Firſt, That no man is drawn to commit ſin by any ſtate or condition that God hath put him into; no, nor by any temptation, either outward or inward that is preſented to him. It is not a ſin to be tempted; no, nor to feel that we are tempted by ſome diſorderly inclination that ariſes in our minds thereupon.

But, ſecondly, Then our ſin begins, when we yield to the temptation, when we are *drawn away by our own luſts, and enticed*, when they get the victory over us, and we do conſent to them. Then *luſt hath conceived, and bringeth forth ſin.*

But, thirdly, Though the very conſent of our wills to a temptation, be a ſin in us; yet that ſin is not ſo great, as it will be afterwards, if it be brought to action. Sin, in the deſire or purpoſe, is but an embryo; it is but the firſt rudiments of ſin, but when it comes to be acted, it is then a ſin in its full dimenſions; and the conſequences of it may be fatal without repentance. *Sin, when it is finiſhed, bringeth forth death.*

Having thus given ſome accouut, how far our hearts or thoughts do fall under government, I now come to my ſecond point, that is, to treat of the art of governing them, or to lay down the neceſſary rules and directions, which are to be obſerved in order thereunto.

And we ſhall not need to go far for theſe rules, for they will all naturally flow from the principles I have already laid down. And I think they may conveniently enough be reduced likewiſe to theſe five following:

Firſt,

First, From what hath been said it appears, that the first and great point to be done by us, if we would keep our hearts in a good frame, and order our thoughts to good purposes, is, that we rightly pitch our main designs; that we chuse that for the great business of our lives, that really ought to be so.

Now what that is, can bear no dispute with any man that will fairly use his reason. For, certainly, that which is our greatest concernment in the world, ought to be our greatest business and design in the world.

And it is evident to every one, that believes he hath a soul to save, that his greatest concernment of all, is to approve himself to that God who made him, and disposes of all his affairs; and who, accordingly as we sincerely endeavour, or not endeavour to serve him, will make us either very happy, or very miserable, both in this life, and the other. So that there can, as I said, be no dispute about what ought to be the greatest business and design of our whole lives, and to which all other businesses must yield.

Now if we be so wise, as really to propose this as our main end, and resolve to mind it, and follow it as such; I say, if we be so wise as to do this; we have made a very great step towards the obtaining a security to ourselves, that the greatest part of our thoughts, and desires, and affections, will be such as they should be; such as will be acceptable to God, and satisfactory to ourselves.

For, as I told you before, whatever is our main business, be it what it will, it will, in a great measure, draw all our thoughts to it. Our natures are so contrived, that we must always be thinking of something or other. But then they are so contrived likewise, that

that we think moſt of that which is moſt in our eye, moſt in our eſteem, moſt in our purſuit. And this is that which our Saviour tells us; *where your treaſure is, there will your heart be alſo.* Whatever it be that you place your happineſs in, upon that will your thoughts run; upon that will your deſires, your inclinations, your affections, be fixed.

We have a world of inſtances of the truth of this every day before our eyes. If a man hath ſet his heart on money, and propoſeth it to himſelf as the buſineſs of his life, to be rich; why, I dare ſay, ſuch an one will own to you, that moſt of his thoughts are upon that project; and that he finds it ſo far from being difficult to keep his mind cloſe and ſteady to his main intereſt, as he calls it; that it is rather difficult to him to think of any other matters.

If a man be given up to pleaſure, and thinks nothing worthy his living for, but wine, and women, and good eating, and good company; Is it not natural in ſuch an one to bend all his thoughts that way? Or doth he put any force or violence upon himſelf, in thinking and contriving all the day long, how to bring to paſs the gratification of his luſts or his appetites?

Why, my brethren, if we did all of us in good earneſt make the ſervice of God, and the purchaſing heaven and happineſs to ourſelves, as much our buſineſs, our end, our deſign, as theſe men make wealth or pleaſure to be theirs, we ſhould certainly be thus affected. The common courſe of our thoughts would naturally and eaſily, without the leaſt conſtraint, run upon thoſe objects: And we ſhould take as great delight in thinking of our treaſure, and contriving for the obtaining of it; as they do in thinking and projecting for theirs.

I ſay,

I ſay, thus it would be with us. For I cannot for my life apprehend, what charms there can be in worldly or ſenſual things, to attract a man's mind; what fetters there can be in them to bind his thoughts, and tie them to themſelves: But that there are the ſame, or greater, in virtue and goodneſs; in the love and favour of God; in a pure conſcience here, and eternal glory hereafter: Always provided, that they are as much made the objects of our choice and purſuit, as the other.

And therefore I cannot but ſuſpect, where we ſee men ſo very cold and backward to ſpiritual things; and ſo apt to ſpend all their thoughts upon trifling, vain, or worldly matters, that it is with a great deal of pains and reluctancy, that they can bring themſelves to think of their everlaſting concernments; I ſay, I cannot but ſuſpect that theſe perſons have not yet *laid up their treaſure in heaven*, as our Saviour expreſſeth it; they have not yet ſo wholly devoted themſelves to the ſervice of God, as to make it their main buſineſs. When once they have done that, I dare aſſure them, they will find it ſo far from being a force upon them, to think of good things, that it will be very natural to them; and they will find the greateſt pleaſure in the world in ſo doing.

Secondly, Whoever would keep his heart always in a good frame, and be able to give a good account of his thoughts to God, muſt have an eſpecial care to avoid two things, viz. idleneſs and looſe company: for both of theſe do ſtrangely unhinge a man's mind; and diſarm it of that ſeverity which is its beſt guard and defence againſt evil thoughts; and make it become an eaſy prey to every temptation that will attack it.

A wiſe

A wiſe man ſhould never be at ſuch a paſs, as to ſay, I have nothing to do, I do not know how to ſpend my next hour: But ſhould ſo order the courſe of his life, that all the portions of his time, as much as is poſſible, may be filled with ſome uſeful, or, at leaſt, ſome innocent employment.

It is idleneſs, and having nothing to do, that is the mother of moſt of thoſe vain, and unprofitable, and ſinful fancies, in which ſome men ſpend their days. And whereas temptations do now and then come in the way of other men; the idle man is forc'd to ſeek out temptations for the ſhipwreck of his virtue. And therefore no wonder, if he that ſeeks them, finds abundance of them.

And truly, looſe and impertinent converſation, which was the other thing I named, though it looks ſomething with a better grace, yet is not much better than idleneſs. For wherever it is much uſed, it will ſo emaſculate a man's mind, and take off the edge and vigour of it, as to ſerious things, that he cannot eaſily get it into a good frame again. *Evil communication* (ſaith St. Paul) *doth corrupt good manners.* And therefore thoſe people, a great part of whoſe life is taken up in gadding up and down; in play; in merry meetings; in telling or hearing idle ſtories, and the like: It is impoſſible but their thoughts and inclinations, and the whole frame of their hearts will be ſuitable; that is to ſay, very frothy; very light and fooliſh; not to ſay, profane, and wicked, and atheiſtical too, if the company they much converſe with, be of that ſtrain.

Thirdly, Another thing of great moment, for the keeping our hearts, is, to be as attentive as is poſſible to the firſt motions of our minds; and whenever we find

find that they tend toward ſomething that is forbidden, to ſtop them as ſoon as we can.

We cannot, as I told you before, often prevent irregular deſires, or paſſions, or inclinations, from ariſing in our minds, upon ſundry occaſions. But this we can do: As ſoon as we are aware of them, we can refuſe our conſent to them; (and in that caſe, I hope they will not be imputed to us as ſins;) nay, not only ſo, but we can refuſe their breaking out, or ſhewing themſelves in our words, or our actions: For the motions of our outward members are all at our command, tho' the firſt motions of our minds be not.

Here therefore will lie a main point in the art of well governing our minds and thoughts. You cannot perhaps, for inſtance, prevent a ſudden paſſion of anger from riſing in your minds upon twenty accidents; but as ſoon as you feel this paſſion, you can thus far ſtifle it; you can ſeal up your mouth, ſo that the paſſion ſhall not vent itſelf in unſeemly words: And if you will withdraw that fuel from the new-kindled fire, it will be ſoon extinguiſhed, and die. Whereas if you ſuffer it to break out in bitter ſpeeches and expreſſions, it will flame beyond meaſure.

Thus again, if any undecent, impure fancies or deſires ſhould be excited in you upon any occaſion; it was not, perhaps, in your power to keep them from coming into your minds: But it is in your power to withdraw from the temptation that cauſed them; and to endeavour to direct your thoughts to ſome other object, at leaſt not to proceed one ſtep in any outward action towards the accompliſhing of thoſe deſires. If you take this courſe, the diſturbance of your mind will ſoon ceaſe, and you will return preſently to your ordinary temper.

And

And let me tell you this farther: That by your being thus careful to resist and smother the first beginnings of sin, you will not only preserve, in a greater measure, the innocency of your minds under the present temptation; but you will also have this further advantage, that by this means you increase your power over your thoughts, against the next time that the temptation returns. Every check you give to the first motions of sin, makes the next assault of them the less furious. And if you do constantly use yourselves thus to guard and watch over your hearts; you will, in time, obtain such a command over them, that you will not be troubled with a quarter of those irregular desires, and passions, which, heretofore, upon several occasions, used to be kindled in you. By this method you will strengthen your faculties, and enlarge your powers; and by degrees bring yourselves to that happy temper of soul, that there will be no great war between the law of your members, and the law of your minds: But the world and the flesh will be crucified to you, as you are to them; that I may use St. Paul's expressions.

But then, fourthly, That you may be able not only to keep bad thoughts out of your minds; but also to have a constant spring of good ones; there are some particular exercises very proper for this purpose to be recommended. Such I mean as these, converse with discreet and pious persons; reading good books, especially the holy scriptures; taking times of meditation and recollection; and above all fervent and constant prayer to God.

It is not to be told how every one of these things doth help to inspire us with good thoughts and purposes.

A little paſſage now and then, tho' but occaſionally dropt in converſation, that is to the buſineſs of virtue and goodneſs, will ſupply us ſometimes with matter for good thoughts for a conſiderable while after. What laſting impreſſions then do you think would be left upon our minds, if we made it our conſtant exerciſe every day, to read or hear ſomething out of the bible, or ſome other good book, with a deſign to grow better thereby?

But above all things, we muſt take care to be diligent and ſerious in our applications to the throne of grace: It is the hearty prayer and devotion, that, when all is done, will prove the moſt effectual means for the keeping our hearts ſteady to that which is good, and ſecuring them from the pollutions of the ſenſible earthly objects that do ſurround us.

O therefore let us be conſtant in our religious offices. Nay, let us take every opportunity that our affairs will allow us, of raiſing our minds to God, and thanking him for his infinite love and goodneſs to us; and imploring the continual influences of his grace and Holy Spirit, and reinforcing our vows and purpoſes of perſevering in his ſervice.

By this means we ſhall come to lead ſpiritual lives indeed. Our ſouls will be a perpetual fountain of good thoughts: And while we live here, our converſation will be in heaven: For God and Chriſt, and the things above, will have our hearts, though the world hath our bodies.

But then, in the fifth and laſt place, Notwithſtanding what I have hitherto ſaid concerning the diligence with which we are to keep our hearts; yet this is always to be remember'd, that with our diligence we muſt be careful to join diſcretion.

My

My meaning is this, We must have a care not to intend our thoughts immoderately, and more than our tempers will bear, even to the best things: But we must so keep our hearts, as at the same time to preserve our healths, and keep up the vigour of our minds.

And the way to do that, is, not to put them too much, or too long, upon the stretch at any one time; but to relax them when there is occasion, and to let them run out, and entertain themselves upon any thing that comes next to hand, so long as it is innocent.

It is a vain thing to imagine, that we can always be thinking of our great business; or that we can always be a praying, or reading, or meditating; or, that, as our condition is in this world, even the greater part of our thoughts should be such as we call devout and religious thoughts.

God hath provided a great deal of other business for us to apply our minds to, so long as we live in this world; and by minding that diligently and conscientiously, we do serve God as acceptably, as if we were reading or praying.

Nay, even then, when we have no urgent business upon our hands to take up our minds, it is not necessary that we should be always thinking of religion. Nor would call every thought a vain, or an idle, or a sinful thought, that hath not God, or our spiritual concernments for its object; even the most spiritually-minded among us, must oftentimes be content to be entertained with such thoughts as our company, or our temper, or the present circumstances we are in, do suggest to us. And provided those thoughts be innocent, and do not intrench upon the laws of piety, and purity, and charity, be they otherwise very trifling

and impertinent: I ſay, I would not look upon them as ill thoughts, nor have any one angry at himſelf upon account of them.

The truth of it is, ſo long as we conſiſt of bodies and ſouls, we cannot always be thinking of ſerious things; they, indeed, are the wiſeſt, that think of them moſt; but it is even dangerous to attempt to think of them always. For, as moſt mens conſtitutions are, that is the ready way to ſpoil the habit of our bodies, and by that means to render our minds perfectly unfit for thinking at all, to any good purpoſes.

Thus have I laid before you the main things wherein, as I do believe, the right governing our thoughts doth conſiſt. And I doubt not they are ſo ſafe, and ſo effectual, that whoſoever will ſincerely practiſe them, as far as he can, will ſo keep his heart, that the iſſues from thence in his life and converſation will be happy and proſperous.

I conclude all with the collect of this day.

Almighty God, who ſeeſt that we have no power of ourſelves to keep ourſelves; keep us both outwardly in our bodies, and inwardly in our ſouls; that we may be defended from all adverſities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts, which may aſſault and hurt the ſoul, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.

SERMON XV.

A Perſuaſive to Prayer.

LUKE xviii. 1.

And he ſpake a parable unto them, to this end, That men ought always to pray, and not to faint.

THE parable which our Saviour ſpake unto them to this end, was this; *There was in a city a judge, who feared not God, nor regarded men; and there was a widow in that city, and ſhe came to him, ſaying, avenge me of my adverſary; and he would not for a while: But afterwards he ſaid within himſelf, though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet becauſe this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, leſt by her continual coming ſhe weary me.*

The application of this parable is eaſy and natural. If a man that neither fears God, nor regards men, hath neither

neither ſenſe of religion nor humanity; may be ſuppoſed to be ſo far prevail'd upon by the earneſt prayer of a miſerable neceſſitous perſon, as to grant the requeſt made to him, and to adminiſter relief to the ſupplicant, merely upon account of the continuance and importunity of the petitions that are put up; then how much more ought we to think that God, who is infinite goodneſs itſelf; who is always kind and bountiful to his creatures; who delights to do good to them, even without their ſeeking and deſiring it; and who is ſo far from being at any pains or trouble for the ſupplying their wants, that it is altogether as eaſy for him to do what is requeſted of him, as not to do it: I ſay, how much more ought we to think, that this God, upon our earneſt and hearty prayer to him for any thing we ſtand in need of, will return us a kind anſwer, and grant us ſuch ſupplies as are proper for us. But then we are to remember, that we *pray always, and faint not.* We muſt be diligent, and importunate, and perſevering in our devotions, otherwiſe we are not to expect any more favourable return of them, than the judge in the parable made to the widow, upon her once or twice putting up her petitions to him.

This is the effect of the parable. I mean not now farther to inſiſt on it, but to ſtick to that point, for the ſake of which our Saviour framed it: *Jeſus ſpake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.*

But what is meant by praying always, and not fainting, which our Lord here obliges us to? Is it to be always on your knees, and to mind no other buſineſs but devotion? So indeed (they ſay) ſome of an-

cient times expounded it; but we meet with them no where but in the catalogues of the heretics: No certainly, *to pray always, and not to faint*, doth imply a quite different thing, of which I ſhall give an account in the following particulars:

Firſt, Theſe words import, that we ſhould be always in a praying temper, in ſuch a diſpoſition of mind, that we always carry about us, and have within us, the neceſſary requiſites of hearty prayer; that is to ſay, a firm belief of God and his providence, a lively ſenſe of our own ſinfulneſs and weakneſs, and manifold neceſſities; and an entire, humble, conſtant dependance upon the divine goodneſs for the ſupply of them. In ſuch a frame of ſoul as this I take that ſpirit of prayer and ſupplication, mentioned in the ſcriptures, to conſiſt.

Secondly, To pray always likewiſe imports, that upon every ſolemn occaſion we ſhould actually addreſs ourſelves to God, ſeeking help from him in all the ſtraits and difficulties we happen into; rendering our acknowledgments for every good that arrives to us in our lives; and imploring his protection, his guidance, his bleſſing upon us, in every work of moment that we go about.

Thirdly, It imports farther, that we ſhould at leaſt, twice every day, either in public, or in private, offer up the ſacrifice of prayer and praiſe in a ſolemn manner unto God. Leſs than this (I think) this phraſe of praying always, as likewiſe that other expreſſion of St. Paul, that we ſhould *pray without ceaſing*[a]: Leſs than this, I ſay, they cannot ſignify; but how much more, I now enquire not. It is, indeed, very probable,

[a] 1 Theſſ. v. 17.

ble, as interpreters have noted, that theſe expreſſions are borrowed from, and have reſpect to, the daily ſacrifices among the Jews. Every day twice (that is to ſay, in the morning and in the evening) by the appointment of God, was offered up a ſacrifice in the temple; to which the devout people reſorted: Which ſacrifice is in ſcripture called by the name of the continual ſacrifice; the daily ſacrifice; the never-ceaſing ſacrifice; and this in contra-diſtinction to the occaſional ſacrifices, which pious perſons uſed to bring thither. If now this be a true account of theſe expreſſions, we cannot be ſaid to pray always, to pray without ceaſing, to pray continually, unleſs we do, at leaſt, twice every day, in the morning, and in the evening, offer up our ſolemn ſacrifice of prayer to God.

But fourthly, *To pray always, and not to faint*, implies great earneſtneſs and importunity in our prayers: It imports, that we ſhould not faintly addreſs to God, but with affection and fervour; with a deep ſenſe of our ſins, and of our wants; and a ſerious and fixed attention to what we are about; and with very ardent deſires, and hungring and thirſting after that grace, or that pardon, or that bleſſing that we pray for. And this is that kind of prayer, which St. James ſtyles *the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man*, which, he ſaith, *availeth much* [b].

Laſtly, *To pray always, and not to faint*, imports continuance and perſeverance in our prayers. That we do not pray by fits and ſtarts, and then intermit our devotion; but conſtantly keep up the fervour of our minds towards God: Not giving over our prayers, tho' we have not a return of them ſo ſoon as we

[b] 1 Theſſ. v. 16.

expect; but *continuing inſtant in prayer*[c], as the apoſtle ſpeaks, and *watching thereunto with all perſeverance*[d].

Theſe are the chief things which are comprized in this command of our Saviour. Now to recommend the practice hereof to you, and to offer ſome arguments, to perſuade every one thus to pray always, and not to faint, is that which I deſign in the remaining part of this diſcourſe.

I do not know how it comes to paſs, that men have generally ſo great an averſion to this duty of prayer. They are very hardly got to it; they are glad of any pretence in the world to be excuſed from it. And when they do come to perform their devotions (which among many is not oftner than the laws or cuſtoms of the country oblige them to) how ſoon are they weary of them! How little do they attend to the buſineſs they are about! As if indeed prayer was one of the greateſt burthens that God could lay upon human nature. Whereas in truth, if our luſts and paſſions were out of the way, and men could be brought to give themſelves the liberty of conſidering things equally; we ſhould be convinced that there is no work that a man can apply himſelf to; no action that he can perform, to which there are greater invitations, greater motives; nay, I was going to ſay, greater temptations of all ſorts, than to this of prayer.

Suppoſe one would ſet himſelf to perſuade any of us to the practice of ſome particular thing which he hath a mind to recommend to us; what more effectual method could he take for the carrying of his point, than to lay before us the common heads of arguments, by which

[c] Rom. xii. 12. [d] Eph. vi. 18.

which all mankind are prevailed upon to undertake any buſineſs or action? And then to convince us, that the thing he would perſuade us to, is recommendable upon all theſe accounts. As for inſtance, that it is a thing fit, and decent, and reaſonable to be done. Nay, it is a thing we are obliged in duty to do, even ſo far obliged, that we act againſt our natures, if we do it not; nor have we any juſt exception againſt it; it is the moſt eaſy thing in the world; it will put us to no manner of trouble, or pains, or ſelf-denial. So far from that, that it is very pleaſant and delightful. And not only ſo, but alſo highly creditable and honourable. And, which is the top of all, the benefits and advantages we ſhall receive from it are extremely great in all reſpects. If now, I ſay, a man can make all theſe things good of the point he would perſuade us to; ſure all the world muſt account us out of our wits, if we do not follow his advice.

Yet all theſe things, it may be evidently made to appear, are true of prayer, and that too in a higher degree than of moſt things in the world. What therefore can be deſired in this exerciſe to recommend the practice thereof to us, that it hath not? And what muſt be concluded of us, if, notwithſtanding all this, we continue obſtinate in our neglects of it? Give me leave to ſpeak a little to theſe ſeveral particulars:

Firſt of all; Doth it recommend any thing to our practice that is fit, and decent, and reaſonable to be done? Then certainly we muſt needs think ourſelves obliged to the conſtant practice of this point we are ſpeaking of. For there is nothing that doth more become us; nor is any thing more undecent, or more unreaſonable, than the neglect of it.

Is it not fit that the ſovereign Lord of us, and of the world, ſhould be acknowledged by us? That we, who do continually depend upon him, ſhould ever and anon be looking up to him, and expreſſing that dependance? Is it not fit that we, who every moment experience a thouſand inſtances of his kindneſs, partake of a thouſand mercies and favours of his, and muſt periſh the next minute, unleſs they be continued to us? Is it not highly fit and reaſonable (I ſay) that we ſhould take notice, at leaſt, of theſe things to this our benefactor?

We ſhould think it very ill manners to paſs by our prince, or even any of our betters, without ſaluting them, or ſome way or other teſtifying our reſpect to them, though they had no way particularly obliged us: But if we were beholden to them for our daily bread; to come into their preſence without taking notice of them, or their bounty to us, would be intolerable. How much more intolerable therefore muſt it be, to paſs by God Almighty day after day; nay, to be in his preſence continually (as indeed we always are) and yet neither to pay any homage or reverence to him, as he is our ſupreme Lord, nor to make any acknowledgements, as he is our daily preſerver and benefactor.

If we had any ſenſe of ingenuity, we ſhould bluſh to think of paſſing a day without ſeveral times lifting up our minds, and doing our reſpects to Almighty God, though there was no other ill in the neglect, than only the horrible rudeneſs and ill-manners that it diſcovers in us.

But, ſecondly, The conſtant exerciſe of prayer is not only recommended to us under the notion of a very decent

decent and reaſonable thing, but as an indiſpenſable duty. God Almighty hath moſt ſtrictly charged it upon us, and we are tranſgreſſors of his laws, if we do not practiſe it.

Nature itſelf ſpeaks ſufficiently plain in this matter. And wherever God hath to the law of nature ſuperadded any revelation of his will, this duty we are ſpeaking of, fails not to make up a conſiderable part of it. It would be endleſs to mention all that is ſaid upon this head by our Lord and his apoſtles in the New-teſtament. I have told you already, that they oblige us to no leſs than praying always, praying without ceaſing. They uſe likewiſe abundance of other expreſſions to the like purpoſe. They bid us, *every where to lift up holy hands. In every thing to make our ſupplications known unto God. To pray in the ſpirit with all prayer and ſupplication, and to watch thereunto with all perſeverance.*

If it be ſaid, there is no ſuch expreſs command for prayer in that revelation which was made to the Jews, I anſwer, it is a great miſtake. The prophets do over and over again enjoin it as the principal part of the worſhip of God. And thoſe that live without praying, are, by thoſe inſpired writers, rank'd among the atheiſts [e]. And as for the law of Moſes itſelf, it is obvious to obſerve, that the greateſt part of it is concerning ſacrifices. Now ſacrifices, if we will underſtand them right, were nothing elſe but that form or method of putting up prayers to God, that was in thoſe times uſed in the world. So that, in truth, ſo far was prayer from being left as a matter of indifferency to the Jews, that moſt of their religion conſiſted in it.

[e] Pſalm lviii. 14.

And accordingly all the devout men of that church ſpent much of their time in this exerciſe. David's manner was to pray ſeven times a day. And Daniel took himſelf to be ſo much obliged to the frequent practice of this duty, that rather than break this cuſtom of performing his ſolemn devotions three times a day, he would expoſe himſelf to the den of lions.

Nay, thirdly, ſo great is our obligation to frequent prayer, that he acts againſt his nature, whoſoever doth not practiſe it. For, in truth, prayer is the proper and peculiar duty of man, as he is a man.

That which conſtitutes the nature of man, and doth formally difference and diſtinguiſh him from all other animals, is, not ſo much the power of reaſon, as the capacity of being religious. There are ſome footſteps of an obſcure reaſon to be obſerved in many creatures beſides man; but in none, except him, is there found any ſenſe of a deity, or diſpoſition towards religion, or any thing that looks like it. That ſeems to be the prerogative of mankind. God endowed them, and them only with ſpirits capable of reflecting upon the author of their beings, and of making acknowledgments, and performing religious worſhip to him.

So that to worſhip God, to converſe with him in the exerciſe of devotion, to pray, and give thanks for his benefits, may be truly ſaid to be the proper office of a man, as man; the natural exerciſe of thoſe faculties that diſtinguiſh him from brute creatures. And conſequently, thoſe that live in a continual neglect of this, what muſt be ſaid of them, but that they act unſuitably to their natures, and are degenerated into a ſort of brutiſhneſs.

It

It appears then, that our obligations to this duty are many and great, and ſuch as there is no poſſibility of evading. But here is our unhappineſs, that thoſe duties which we are moſt ſtrictly obliged to, are not thoſe that we are always moſt inclined to practiſe. There may be ſomething in the moſt indiſpenſable duties ſo harſh and unpleaſant; ſo diſagreeing with our other appetites or intereſts; they may be ſo hard to be performed; ſo laborious, or ſo expenſive, or, upon ſome other account, ſo ungrateful, that we ſhall naturally put ourſelves upon the finding out excuſes for the ridding our hands of them, and eaſily ſatisfy our minds for ſo doing.

But now, which I deſire in the fourth place to be conſidered, There are none of theſe pretences to be made againſt this duty of prayer; none of theſe inconveniencies do attend it. But it is ſo naturally, ſo eaſily performed; and ſo inoffenſively to all our other appetites and intereſts; that one would think, nothing but mere lazineſs, or ſtupidity, could hinder a man from the daily exerciſe of it.

It requires no great parts, or learning, or ſtudy, for the diſcharging it. The meaneſt capacity, the moſt un-improved underſtanding, if there be but an honeſt heart, may perform it as well as the learnedeſt man in the world.

It requires no labour or toil. The feebleſt and moſt diſpirited body, that can but lift up eyes to heaven, and direct wiſhes thither, doth it as effectually as the moſt vigorous conſtitution.

It doth not go againſt the grain of any natural inclination; nor put the body to any pain or hardſhip. Nor doth it contradict any appetite or affection that nature

nature hath implanted in us. No humour, but either the ſottiſh or the malicious, the brutiſh or the deviliſh, is diſtaſted by it.

It puts us to no charge or expence in the world, ſave that of our thoughts; yet that is the nobleſt way of ſpending them: And if they be not employed thus, it is ten to one but they will be employed much worſe.

It is not at all conſumptive of our time. For we may attend this work, when we are doing other buſineſs; and there is no man ſo full of buſineſs, but he hath abundance of vacant ſpaces, which he will not know how to fill up to any good purpoſe, unleſs he hath learned this art of ſaving time.

In a word, there is no objection againſt it, it is one of the eaſieſt, naturaleſt, inoffenſiveſt duties in the world: Nay, ſo eaſy it is, that the moſt ſelfiſh man, if he was to make his own terms with God Almighty, could not deſire to obtain the bleſſings he ſtands in need of, upon eaſier: If all the mercies and benefits we do daily and hourly need, and conſequently muſt expect and wiſh for; I ſay, if they be not worth aſking at the hands of God, or returning thanks for them, after he has beſtowed them, they are worth nothing.

But beſides the unexceptionableneſs and eaſineſs of this duty, it is alſo, in the fifth place, the moſt pleaſant and delightful exerciſe in the world. It is true, vicious men will not eaſily think ſo, but look upon it as a dry inſipid employment; but ſo would the very beatifical viſion of God, and all the exerciſes of glorified ſouls in heaven, appear to ſuch men. But they are not competent judges of matters of this nature, having neither experience of them, nor diſpoſition towards

wards them. Thoſe only can form right notions of theſe ſpiritual exerciſes, who have a good ſenſe and reliſh of God upon their minds, and have uſed and accuſtomed themſelves to devotion. Now to all ſuch, I appeal, whether the delights and ſatisfaction, and conſolation that they receive from converſing with God, and a hearty pouring out their ſouls unto him, be not inexpreſſible? Whether they do not find more joy, and peace, and comfort, in their attendance upon God's ſervice, either in public or private, than ever they did from the pleaſures and gratifications of any of their outward ſenſes?

So much as the ſoul is more pure and excellent than the body, ſo much are the pleaſures and gratifications of that, more exquiſitely delicious than thoſe that ariſe from corporeal objects. But of all the pleaſures of the ſoul, thoſe that it receiveth from the communications of God to it, in the exerciſe of devotion, are incomparably the higheſt, and moſt affecting. We may talk of pleaſures and enjoyments, but no man ever truly found them, till he became acquainted with God, and was made ſenſible of his love, and partaker of his ſpiritual favours, and lived in an entire friendſhip and communion with him; which friendſhip and communion is chiefly, if not only, both expreſſed and maintained by prayer, and other exerciſes of devotion.

Add to this, in the ſixth place, that prayer is not only the moſt delightful employment, but the moſt creditable and honourable that our natures are capable of. We account it, and very juſtly, a mighty privilege and dignity to be known to princes and great men; to have their ear, and to enjoy the liberty of acceſs to them at all times; but what is this to the honour and

dignity

dignity we receive, in having leave given us at all times, to approach into the preſence of the King of the world?

That we, poor ſinful duſt and aſhes, ſhould be permitted to ſpeak to ſo tranſcendent a Majeſty! Nay, ſhould have free liberty given us to converſe with him as with a friend! To open all our wants, to acquaint him with all our concernments, to make known every thought of our hearts, and every affair of our lives to him! Nay, and to be aſſured that he will be ſo far from taking amiſs this boldneſs in us, that he will favourably accept all our applications, and make as kind returns, as we ourſelves can wiſh or deſire! What greater honour are we capable of than this? O therefore, how far are they ſunk below all the ambition of human nature, that will not take all opportunities of thus honouring and doing credit to themſelves by the exerciſe of devotion!

But ſo ſelfiſh are the ſpirits and tempers of many of us, that nothing will work upon them, but the conſideration of gain, and profit, and advantage: Let us ſee therefore what of this kind we may promiſe to ourſelves from prayer, which is my ſeventh and laſt conſideration.

And let the point be put upon this iſſue. Let all that has hitherto been ſaid for the recommending of prayer go for nothing. If it do not appear, that it is as profitable and gainful an exerciſe, as it is reaſonable and due; as it is eaſy, and pleaſant, and honourable; let no man trouble himſelf about it; but throw off all thoughts of it for ever.

But in this reſpect alſo the motives to prayer are infinite. No man can number the benefits and advantages

vantages that accrue to us from it. I can here but only touch upon a few of the many.

Prayer is the moſt proper means to ennoble, and refine, and ſpiritualize our natures. Were it not for this, it would be impoſſible to preſerve our ſouls aloft, in the midſt of ſuch a heap of earthly rubbiſh, with which they are overwhelmed. Our daily converſe with material objects would make us wholly ſenſual, and the ſpirit would in a manner be loſt to the fleſh. And ſo it doth really fare with all thoſe that live without devotion towards God. However they may retain ſo much worldly prudence, as to enable them to govern their temporal affairs to their advantage; yet their ſouls do perfectly grovel upon the earth, they are utterly devoid of the ſpiritual life; they have no more ſenſe of the nobleſt and beſt things, which it is the perfection of their faculties to be employed about, than a blind man hath of colours. Into this dull ſtate we ſhall all ſink, if we do not take care to maintain a conſtant devotion towards God; for it is by that that the ſenſe of goodneſs is kept alive in us. It is that that raiſes us above the world, and preſerves our minds from the defilements of the earth, which, by their continual mingling with material things, they would otherwiſe neceſſarily contract.

But further, prayer doth not only tend to the bettering the conſtitution of our minds; but the benefits and good influences of it do extend alſo to all the affairs and actions of our lives. No-body can tell, but he that hath tried, how much devout and affectionate prayer doth diſpoſe a man to go about his buſineſs in the world. So far is this exerciſe from hindering our employments, as is commonly pretended, that in truth it is a great furtherance to them.

Beſides;

Beſides; it is the beſt antidote in the world againſt all diſappointments and vexations that we can meet with; againſt every ungrateful and diſpleaſing accident that comes upon us in the courſe of our lives. He that converſeth much with God, and uſeth to make all his concernments known to him, is prepared to bear all things patiently and evenly, whatſoever happen; nor can he light into any circumſtances of life, which will not be, not only ſupportable to him, but eaſy alſo.

Add to this in the laſt place, that it is prayer that ſecures the bleſſing of God, both upon our perſons, and upon our labours; upon our baſket and ſtore; upon our families; upon our employments; and on all that we have, or do. So great is the virtue of prayer, that it turns all the actions of our natural or civil life, however indifferent they be, into actions of religion. And every thing that we have, or comes to us, is thereby made a bleſſing of God, which, without it, perhaps, might have been a croſs and affliction. It is prayer by which every thing and every action is ſanctified to believers.

I might name ſeveral other benefits and advantages to be reaped from the conſcientious practice of this duty; but thoſe that I have mentioned may (I think) if they be conſidered, be ſufficient to recommend it to any man whatſoever, that hath the leaſt kindneſs for himſelf: And therefore I will not burthen your memories with heaping up more motives. Only one thing I deſire leave to preſs a little more earneſtly, and particularly, than I have yet done, and that is, the abſolute neceſſity of conſtant prayer, in order to a holy and virtuous life.

Do

Do any of you here preſent, in good earneſt, mean to live as you ſhould do? Do you really intend or deſire to endeavour after ſuch a pitch of virtue and holineſs, as will be available for the ſaving of your ſouls everlaſtingly? If you do not, 'tis in vain to attempt the perſuading you to any thing of this nature. If you do, then give me leave to tell you, that it is abſolutely neceſſary that you ſhould live in the conſtant exerciſe of prayer, otherwiſe you will never do your buſineſs. And on the other ſide, I dare aſſure you, if you do thus practiſe, you will not fail of attaining the end you aim at.

Theſe three things I dare lay down for truth in this matter:

Firſt, It is impoſſible for any man to be good, that lives without conſtant praying.

Secondly, Whoever is good at the preſent, yet if he diſuſe himſelf in this point, he will not continue good long.

And laſtly, Whoever makes a conſcience of praying frequently and heartily, and continues ſo to do, though he cannot at preſent be ſaid to be a good man, yet it is impoſſible for him long to continue bad; he will certainly at laſt get the victory over his luſts and evil habits. So that prayer is both the means, without which virtue cannot be attained; and the means that never fails of attaining it; and the ſecurity of it, when it is attained. Of theſe three things very briefly, and I have done.

Firſt, I ſay, no man can be a virtuous man, that lives without praying. I do not deny, that ſome who make no great conſcience of this duty, but live in an habitual neglect of it, may ſo far retain the notions of

good

good and evil, and thoſe notions may ſo far influence their actions, as that they ſhall not be notoriouſly and ſcandalouſly vicious. It may be, they will not lye, nor cheat, nor oppreſs any one. It may be, they do not live in a courſe of lewdneſs and debauchery; nor will be engag'd in any deſign or action that is apparently baſe or diſhonourable. But all this while theſe men are far from being virtuous in the ſenſe we now ſpeak of. For we ſpeak of ſuch a virtue as recommends us to God; ſuch a virtue as will be effectual for our ſalvation in the other world. Now to ſuch a virtue as this, there goes nothing leſs than an univerſal care over all our actions; a ſerious endeavour to frame all our converſation ſuitably and conformably to the laws of our Saviour. But how can any man think he takes care of this, that knowingly and willingly lives in a conſtant contradiction to one of the principal duties of our Saviour's religion.

Our whole duty is made up but of three things; That a man live ſoberly with reſpect to himſelf; righteouſly with reſpect to his neighbour; and piouſly with reſpect to God. Suppoſing now that a man take care of the two former, that is, of doing his duty to himſelf and his neighbour (which yet I believe never any man did, that made no conſcience of neglecting his prayer: But ſuppoſe a man could ſatisfy himſelf as to theſe two points of his duty) yet if he make no conſcience of the third, that is, of piety towards God (as no man can make conſcience of that, who makes it no matter of conſcience, whether he ſays his prayers or no) in what ſenſe or notion can this man be ſaid to have done his duty, or to lead a virtuous life? Certainly in no ſenſe at all. For as to one third part of his

his duty (which is indeed as conſiderable, at leaſt, if not more, than either of the other) he is a notorious tranſgreſſor. And tho' he be not unjuſt, tho' he be not debauched, yet wanting piety towards God, he is impious; and that will as certainly damn him, as either of the other. Either therefore one of theſe two things muſt be made appear, that is to ſay, that there may be virtue, ſuch virtue as will recommend us to God without piety: Or that there may be piety without ever praying, or worſhipping God (neither of which I believe will be eaſily affirmed;) or it will follow, that where there is no praying, there is no virtue, and conſequently no ſalvation.

But beſides; we all know there is no poſſibility of living a holy and virtuous life, ſuch a life as our religion requires of us, and which alone will ſtand us in ſtead in the day of judgment) without the grace of God, and the aſſiſtances of his Holy Spirit. And we all know likewiſe, that theſe are no way to be come by, but by earneſt, and affectionate, and conſtant prayer. How therefore is it poſſible, that any man, who is not very ſerious and frequent in the exerciſe of devotion, ſhould ever be able to live a holy life? He may, indeed, by his own ſtudy, and for his own intereſt, poſſeſs himſelf of ſuch good qualities, as may make a fair ſhew in the world, and recommend him to all about him: But the inward principle of goodneſs and holineſs he cannot have; becauſe he doth not practiſe the means of obtaining the Grace and Spirit of God, by which alone, that principle is to be wrought in him.

But ſecondly, Let a man at preſent be in a good ſtate of ſoul, yet it is impoſſible to preſerve himſelf in that

ſtate,

ſtate, without the conſtant exerciſe of devotion. If a man once begin to neglect his prayers, or to grow more dull or remiſs in them, or more averſe to them, it is a certain argument, that he is in a declining condition, as to virtue and goodneſs. And as that neglect, or that dulneſs, or that averſion increaſes, in the ſame degree doth the goodneſs of his condition abate alſo. And when once it is come to that paſs with him, that the flame of devotion is quite extinguiſhed in his heart, ſo that he can live, and enjoy himſelf without any converſe or intercourſe with God in prayer; he may from that period, date the loſs of his ſpiritual life. He is reduced to this ſtate of a ſenſual natural man; alive to the world, and to his luſts, but perfectly dead to God.

The plain Engliſh is, prayer and devotion is as neceſſary a means to preſerve the union between the ſoul and God, in which our ſpiritual life conſiſts, as meat and drink is, to preſerve the union between our ſouls and bodies, in which our natural life conſiſts; and we may every whit as reaſonably expect to keep our bodies alive, without the conſtant and daily uſe of eating and drinking, as we can expect to keep our ſouls alive to God, without the conſtant and daily exerciſe of devotion.

This may to ſome appear ſtrange doctrine: but I do believe, I may appeal to experience for the truth of it. Nay, I dare put the queſtion to any one, that ever took any ſerious care of his ſoul, and ſincerely endeavoured to live virtuouſly, and to pleaſe God, whether he hath not found the matter to be ſo as I have repreſented?

Have

Have not ſuch always found, that ſo long as they kept up the fervour and vigour of their devotion, ſo long as they were conſtant and diligent in their prayers, and other holy exerciſes; ſo long nothing could hurt them, ſo long they have always maintained their poſt, and rather grown better than worſe? And tho' they have ſometimes been foully overtaken by ſome ſin that they reſolved againſt, yet that relapſe hath done them no miſchief. Their continuance in their prayers hath been an antidote againſt the malignity of the ſin; and they have preſently weather'd it out, and ſuffer'd no ill conſequence by it; but it has rather made them more watchful over themſelves, and more careful of their actions afterward.

But, on the other ſide, have they not always found, that when once they began to abate of the fervour of their devotions; when once they began to pray ſeldomer, or with more coldneſs and indifference; they then began to live more looſly and careleſly; to be more dull and ſluggiſh towards every good work? till perhaps, by degrees, the true ſenſe of God and religion hath been in a great meaſure worn off from their ſpirits, and they in a manner have returned to a worldly and ſenſual life. Nay, have they not often found, that when it has been their misfortune to break looſe from their duty, and ſink for ſome time into a ſtate of careleſſneſs and forgetfulneſs of God, and of their own vows and reſolutions, (as it hath ſometimes happened to very good men;) I ſay, have they not often found that this their going backwards in goodneſs, was occaſioned purely and ſolely by the intermiſſion of their devotions? That there was no viſible reaſon or account to be given of this their fall, but only, that thro'

ſluggiſhneſs, or ſome other cauſe, they have neglected to pray to God ſo earneſtly and ſo frequently as they uſed to do? I am confident, a great many can ſay this out of their own experience: So that it concerns every man, that is at preſent in a good diſpoſition of mind, and hath good hopes towards God; it concerns him, as he loves his ſoul; as he would not loſe all the fruits of his paſt labours and endeavours in the ſervice of God; by all means poſſible to keep his heart in a devout frame: And, whatever comes of it, not to grow cold or languid in his prayers; or to omit or diſuſe them, either in public or private, upon any pretence whatſoever.

But, thirdly and laſtly, To conclude all, there is this farther to be ſaid for the encouragement of all ſorts of perſons to perſevere in the practice of this duty, namely, that whoever makes conſcience of ſaying his prayers frequently and heartily, and continues ſo to do, though he be not good at the preſent, yet it is impoſſible for him to continue long bad. He will at laſt certainly get the victory over all his luſts and evil habits, and attain to the favour of God, and the ſalvation of his own ſoul. This neceſſarily follows from what hath been ſaid. A courſe of prayer, and a courſe of ſin, cannot conſiſt together; one will neceſſarily deſtroy the other. Praying will either make a man leave ſinning (as a pious man of our own uſed to ſay) or ſinning will make a man leave praying: But this is to be underſtood of prayer, that is put up to God with great ſerioufneſs, and heartineſs, and out of a ſenſe of duty and conſcience; for as for thoſe formal prayers that are made out of cuſtom, or upon the account of

education, or for the ſerving ſome worldly ends of intereſt or reputation, or the like; God reſpects them no more than the impertinent tattle of fools.

All thoſe of us, therefore, that mean and deſign to be good, though they are not ſo already; let us above all things, take care to mind our prayers; let us pray to God in private; let us pray to God with our families; and let us join, as oft as we can, with the prayers of the public aſſemblies. This I am ſure, is the beſt method we can take for the reforming our lives, and for the growing in all virtue and goodneſs. And the more we practiſe it, the better we ſhall like it. And if we perſevere therein, we ſhall find the comfort of it, both in the grace and aſſiſtance we ſhall receive from the Holy Spirit, for the vanquiſhing all our luſts and corruptions; and in the bleſſings we ſhall procure from God, both to ourſelves and our families, and all our affairs and concernments; and laſtly, in the everlaſting ſalvation of our ſouls in the day of the Lord Jeſus. *To whom*, &c.

End of the FIRST VOLUME.